Report submitted to the United States Agency for International Development

April 2004

Bangladesh

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices National Survey Covering Democracy and Governance Issues

Deliverable 10: Survey Research Report

Work Conducted under USAID Contract No. AEP-I-00-99-00041-00
General Democracy and Governance Analytical Support and Implementation Services Indefinite Quantity Contract

CTO for the basic contract: Joshua Kaufman
Center for Democracy and Governance, G/DG
Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-3100

Submitted to:

USAID/Bangladesh

Submitted by:

ARD, Inc.
159 Bank Street, Suite 300
Burlington, Vermont 05401 USA
Telephone: +1(802) 658-3890
Fax: +1(802) 658-4247
E-mail: ard@ardinc.com

in association with

Survey Research Group of Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Telephone: +880(2) 9353350
E-mail: srgb@consultant.com

Acknowledgements

ARD, Inc. and the Survey Research Group of Bangladesh (SRGB) would like to extend thanks to Jessica Hunter, Carol Horning, Nazrul Islam, and Rezaul Haque at USAID, all of whom provided the ARD/SRGB Team with thoughtful and timely feedback on all aspects of the research.

ARD and SRGB also thank Firoze Ahmed of the US Embassy who, together with Rezaul Haque, provided careful and thorough reviews of the Bangla version of the questionnaire, thus ensuring that it accurately reflected both the content of the questions being asked and the manner in which they were asked.

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CSO	civil society organization
DG	democracy and governance
IR	intermediate result
KAP	knowledge, attitudes, and practices
NGO	nongovernmental organization
SO	strategic objective
SRGB	Survey Research Group of Bangladesh
SSC	secondary school certificate
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

USAID/Bangladesh's Democracy and Governance (DG) program is designed to stimulate, catalyze, and contribute to the development of democracy in Bangladesh. Strategic Objective (SO) 9 focuses on making three specific sectors—local government, political parties, and human rights—more democratic, effective, and efficient, and thus more responsive to citizens' needs.[1]

USAID/Bangladesh's Office of Democracy, Governance, and Education hired ARD, Inc. of Burlington, Vermont, USA, in association with the Survey Research Group of Bangladesh (SRGB) to provide quantitative and qualitative information on DG issues to the Mission. The resulting Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) National Survey of Bangladesh was conducted as a task order of the USAID General Democracy and Governance Analytical Support and Implementation Indefinite Quantity Contract (AEP-I-00-99-00041-00).

The purpose of the study was to provide qualitative and quantitative information on democracy knowledge, attitudes, and practices to:

- inform USAID/Bangladesh's strategic planning process;
- establish a baseline to measure the progress of USAID/Bangladesh's DG activities; and
- provide a useful base of information for donors, policymakers, and civil society.

The study consisted of two parts, a statistically designed nationwide quantitative survey of 3,140 adults aged 18 and older, and 12 qualitative focus group sessions. The survey questionnaire consisted of 171 questions covering issues and views about the general situation in the country; knowledge and attitudes on, and practices of democracy, human rights, and women's rights; perceptions of leading government and political institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); views and practices of corruption and civil society participation; views on political parties[2]; and demographic information. The survey consisted of one-on-one interviews with 3,140 individuals[3] in six divisions conducted between 17 November and 31 December 2003. Prior to analysis, the resulting data were weighted by actual population sizes in each division according to the 1990 census. The overall (nationwide) sampling error was less than two percent.[4]

In addition, the ARD/SRGB Team[5] conducted 12 focus groups in four divisions from 25 January to 7 February 2004. Focus groups were limited to a maximum of 10 participants, with each session

---

[1] USAID/Bangladesh, "DG Performance Monitoring Plan," December 2003.

[2] For the nationwide survey, the Mission made an explicit decision not to ask respondents to identify their political party. This decision was based on a range of factors, including a desire for the resulting data to be useful to a wide range of individuals and groups, including the political parties themselves, and for the survey to be repeated in the medium and long terms. Questions about political party membership would also have been redundant with other surveys being conducted by USAID and others in Bangladesh.

[3] 1,570 male; 1,570 female; 1,799 urban; 1,341 rural.

[4] Using $N = (z_{a/2})^2 s^2 / \pm B^2$ for a normal distribution.

[5] The ARD/SRGB Team was led by Dr. Lynnette Wood, who also carried out the statistical data analysis for the nationwide survey. Dr. Mohammed Yusuf determined the sample size, designed the sampling methodology, and determined the weighting factors to be applied to the resulting data. Mr. Brian Katulis developed the survey instrument and provided guidelines for its implementation. Mr. Nazrul Islam provided oversight of the implementation of the nationwide survey and focus group sessions, both of which were implemented by SRGB staff. Mr. Siddiquer Rahman and his staff conducted a third-party field check of the survey. Mr. David Green and Ms. Zyck Baggett provided administrative oversight to ARD's contributions, while Mr. Said Haq provided

representing a specific category of individual: male/female, rural/urban, age range, education level, and political affiliation. The focus groups provided qualitative information, shedding light and providing depth and color to the findings of the quantitative survey.

Quantitative Results

General Mood and Leading Concerns. The survey questionnaire began by asking respondents to reflect on their views about the general direction of the country and their leading priorities and concerns, providing context and a sense of the overall "opinion environment" in which the research took place.

The overall mood of the country was found to be sharply mixed, with 48 percent saying the country is going in the right direction and 47 percent saying the wrong direction. Women were somewhat more optimistic than men: 51 percent of women said the country is going in the right direction compared to 45 percent of men. Urban residents tended to be more positive than rural ones: 60 percent of urban residents said the country is going in the right direction, but only 44 percent of rural citizens said the same.

Within this sharply divided country, a hierarchy of concerns about particular issues emerged from the research, which could be divided into four levels or "tiers." (This same four-tier hierarchy of concerns emerged later in the survey, when respondents ranked a series of basic rights.)

Tier 1: Respondents ranked unemployment as the most important issue tested in the survey, with 92 percent of the public saying it was very important. Education was statistically tied at 91 percent.

Tier 2: Poverty (84%), law and order (84%), roads (83%), and health care (81%) were the "quality of life" issues that ordinary citizens believe their government should act on. Women's rights, an issue directly related to USAID's DG program, also fell into this second tier of concerns at 80 percent.

Tier 3: Corruption (76%), democracy (71%), and human rights (69%) fell into a third tier of concerns. This does not mean that ordinary people viewed these issues as unimportant—on the contrary, strong majorities said that they were important. However, on a relative scale, ordinary citizens saw them as lower priorities compared to the most basic issues of work, law and order, and infrastructure.

Tier 4: Discrimination against minorities (48%), political violence (47%), and religious extremism (47%) were at the bottom of the issues tested by the survey.

Democracy. An important objective of the research was to help USAID gain a deeper understanding into how ordinary Bangladesh citizens understand and feel about "democracy" and "human rights."

Overall, the survey showed that there was fairly strong support for democracy among the public, and the public's associations with the term "democracy" were largely positive. For example, on a favorability scale of 0-100,[6] "democracy" received a fairly positive average score of 64. Younger adults aged 18 to 29 expressed a somewhat more favorable view of democracy, giving it an average score of 66, compared to an average of 62 among those aged 30 to 44 and an average of 61 among those aged 45 and over.

In a separate question, a "government ruled by democratically elected representatives" emerged as the top choice of nearly two thirds (62%) of the respondents. About one in five (21%) chose a "government ruled

administrative oversight to those of SRGB. Dr. Wood and Mr. Katulis shared responsibility for presenting the final results and preparing this final report.

[6] 0 = unfavorable, 50 = neutral, and 100 = favorable.

by Islamic law, with respected religious figures as leaders." Other choices were "a government ruled by a military leader who got things done" at 11 percent and "a non-elected government ruled by specialists, experts, and business leaders who know what it takes to develop a country" at three percent. (An additional three percent responded "do not know" or refused to respond.) Respondents also gave democracy strong marks for being the best system for protecting individuals' rights and freedoms, ensuring equality of all citizens, providing order and security, keeping the country united, and solving community problems because it gives everyone the chance to speak about their concerns and interests. Fully 84 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any form of government." These results are encouraging since they demonstrate that large majorities of the public have mostly positive associations with democracy (i.e., the strategic landscape when it comes to public opinion of democracy is generally favorable) and that the makings of a strong democratic values architecture exists.

At the same time, the public seemed almost fixated on elections and the right to vote. In response to the open-ended question, "What do you understand as democracy?" the leading response (32%) was the "right to vote and choose leaders in elections," followed by "do not know" (29%). Freedom of speech and opinion came in third (22%), followed by respect for human rights (12%).

What stood out consistently through a series of questions was a lack of a strong sense participation in democratic processes beyond participation in elections. Fully 80 percent of respondents stated that they were certain to vote in the next elections, a strong endorsement of the importance of this act. But the survey results also showed that a substantial percentage of the population is starting to wonder if their ballot boxes are hooked up to anything, or else they simply lack confidence in their ability as individuals to influence government actions. Specifically, three quarters (76%) of respondents felt they had "no influence at all" on government actions and policy. The challenge for USAID/Bangladesh will be to help citizens look beyond elections and to find ways to hold their representatives and government accountable between elections. (More on this under the section entitled "Civil Society Participation.")

Another important finding is that a sizable segment of Bangladesh's adult population is not very familiar with democracy and its institutions. As noted above in the open-ended question on democracy, slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (29%) did not offer a definition of democracy. Fifteen percent did not identify democracy when asked to rank it on the 0-100 favorability scale, and 12 percent said "do not know" when asked whether they felt democracy was an important issue facing the country. Based on these results, it seems that approximately ten to 20 percent of the adult population are less aware of democracy and its main institutions, or lack the confidence to provide opinions about them.

Human Rights and Women's Rights. There was a general sense among more than three quarters (76%) of respondents that men and women have equal rights and freedoms. This result is surprising on the surface, but may reflect how respondents understand the word "rights." When asked to define the term "basic human rights" in an open-ended question, the most common response was "do not know" at 44 percent, followed by 27 percent who defined "basic human rights" in terms of basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

The public expressed a general sense of progress in the condition of women compared to five years ago. Seven in ten respondents (71%) said that women are better off compared to five years ago. The top three leading reasons given by those who said women are better off were that women's participation in the workforce has increased, women are more educated and aware, and women's freedom to travel and move around has increased. Only 16 percent said women are worse off, naming declining safety and security as the dominant reason.

At the same time, survey respondents recognized the problems of violence against women. Fully 87 percent of respondents said they have talked about the issue of violence against women. The leading response to the open-ended question, "What is your understanding of violence against women?" was "torture for dowry" at 38 percent, with "physical abuse and torture (in general)" following at 29 percent, "rape" at 23 percent, "acid throwing" at 19 percent, and "abuse and torture by husband" at 18 percent.[7]

Perceptions of Leading Government and Political Institutions. Among various institutions key to democracy and governance in Bangladesh, the military was the most popular with an average favorability score of 77 on a scale of 0-100. Elected bodies of government received fairly positive scores. The National Parliament received an average score of 62 and local government received an average score of 61. Just as the younger generation was slightly more positive about democracy, it was also more positive about the primary elected institutions of democracy. Respondents viewed political parties somewhat less favorably than Parliament and local government, with an average score of 44 on the favorability scale. The police received the lowest ratings of all, with an average favorability score of 33.

In general, expectations were fairly strong for the National Parliament. When asked in an open-ended question what kinds of things people expect from their Member of Parliament, the leading responses were developing the country through infrastructure projects (53%), eliminating poverty (30%), developing educational institutions (20%), fighting crime and supporting law and order (19%), and creating jobs (18%)—many of the same Tier 1 and Tier 2 concerns discussed above.

Ordinary citizens seemed slightly more aware of and favorably disposed toward their local government. One indication of this is the percentage of people who said they could identify these institutions; 83 percent of respondents could identify the National Parliament, whereas 95 percent identified the Union Parishad or Municipal Council (local government institutions in rural and urban areas, respectively). In response to an open-ended question, "Who are the most important leaders that solve disputes and problems and have enough influence to effectively deal with important issues in your community or neighborhood?" the leading response was local government officials at 45 percent. By contrast, only 14 percent of respondents named national representatives. But although the public may perceive local government officials as more accessible than members of the National Parliament, there are strong concerns that local government lacks the authority or resources to get things done.

A battery of questions placed toward the middle of the survey revealed a number of key perceptions and attitudes about the National Parliament and local government. The largest gap was on "listens to people like you" with 72 percent agreeing that this describes local government, versus only 45 percent agreeing this describes National Parliament. Nevertheless, the public was divided over whether it is better to have a strong central government or to give greater authority to the local governments, with 47 percent saying it is better to have a strong central government and 43 percent saying more authority should be given to local government. This may be a sign of a lack of clarity that exists about which levels of government are responsible for what in Bangladesh, or of perceptions that local government may lack the authority and resources to effectively address the public's leading concerns. (Both possibilities are findings from the focus groups).

Among the institutions of government examined, the military received very favorable ratings, and the police were least trusted. "Operation Clean Heart[8]" plays an important role in this rating. Fully nine in ten

[7] These responses are not mutually exclusive, but this is the nature of open-ended questions. The overall picture, though, is still bleak.

[8] Operation Clean Heart was a controversial program lauched in October 2002 to crack down on corruption, crime, and domestic terrorism in Bangladesh. By coordinating the efforts of the country's military, police, and civil administration (the "combined forces") in a concentrated fashion—deploying tens of thousands of soliers across

respondents (92%) agreed with the statement, "to maintain law and order, it is necessary to employ the combined forces as was done in 2002," with 83 percent of the public strongly agreeing with this statement. But the public does not see the military as the answer to problems in the community. Only two percent of respondents said that military personnel solve problems and disputes in their communities.

When it came to the "governance" portion of "democracy and governance," it is clear that special challenges exist with the police, which received a cool favorability score of 33. The main problems center on corruption and violence. Nine in ten (89%) respondents agreed with the statement, "If I take help from the police, I have to pay a bribe." More than three quarters (77%) agreed that the police cause problems for them and their families if they go to the police; and a majority (53%) agreed with the statement, "I fear going to the police because it puts me at risk of physical harm."

Corruption. Nearly half (49%) of the respondents said that corruption has increased over the last year, and another 13 percent said it has stayed the same. Fully 18 percent said they have "experienced an incident in the past year when corruption directly impacted" their lives. When asked which qualities make a good leader, the leading response was "honest and trustworthy," with 45 percent choosing this from a closed list of seven options.

The democratic system of government generally did not get the blame for corruption: 45 percent disagreed with the statement, "More than any other system, democracy opens the way for corrupt people to steal money." However, a substantial percentage of the respondents (36%) agreed with this statement, demonstrating that perhaps some skepticism is arising with respect to democracy in Bangladesh, borne out of the problems of corruption.

The most corrupt institutions, according to responses to an open-ended question, are the police at 47 percent, followed by the courts (11%), schools and the education department (8%), and the electricity department (6%).[9] Further confirmation of the dim view of the police in the eyes of the average citizen was found in a separate open-ended question that asked "Where does most of your family's money go when you have to spend money on bribes and corruption?" The police came out on top, followed by the electricity department and the land office.

Thus, the results confirm other surveys' findings that corruption is a major problem in Bangladesh. Corruption clearly impacts the lives of broad segments of the population in negative ways. Importantly, the *perception* of corruption is much stronger than reported instances of actual corruption. While almost nine in ten (89%) respondents believe they need to pay a bride to receive help from the police, slightly less than one in five (18%) report a specific incidence of corruption directly impacting their lives in the last year.

Several points help to elucidate the seeming contradiction between the high number of respondents who believe that corruption is a problem and the lower number who reported experiencing a specific incident of corruption within the last year. First is the difference in terminology between the words "bribe" (*gush*)

---

the country at one time—the program apprehended thousands of suspected domestic terrorists and violent criminals and recovered many illegal weapons. Most of the controvery surrounding the operation had to do with allegations of human rights violations, includings allegations that some prisoners were tortured to death. Additional controvery surrounded allegations that some individuals were apprehended for their political affiliations rather than for criminal activites.

[9] Other responses to this open-ended questions were health services (4%); "Ministry," political parties, and the land office (at three percent each); and the customs department, NGOs, and the tax department (at two percent each). Others were mentioned one percent of the time or less, for a total of nine percent "others." Fully 29 percent responded "do not know." (The total adds up to more than 100 percent because respondents were allowed to give up to two answers.)

and "corruption" (*durnity*), both of which were purposely used in the survey. Second, the perception of corruption (that one *would* have to pay a bride) is quite different from the actual experience of it (that one *did* pay a bribe). The specific question on personal experiences with corruption is time-bound, focused on actual instances of corruption in the last year. It is expected that this type of question would result in a lower figure. And finally, definitions of corruption vary from one individual to the next. Whereas one person may not report a corrupt act for fear of retribution, another may not even consider the same act to be corrupt. Both would result in under-reporting.

Civil Society Participation. Although the public strongly supports its right to vote, it does not seem to have much of an idea about its role between elections, such as how to organize in a way that serves public interests or how to hold elected representatives accountable for their promises.

Importantly, the percentage of people who said they never took part in community groups and organizations was very high (71%). Almost three times as many respondents reported a decline in their participation versus those who said their participation has increased over the last five years, with 16 percent saying that they have taken part in fewer community groups and only six percent indicating an increase in participation in the last five years.

The civic participation that does take place is focused on things most directly connected to everyday life. The most ostensible forms of political participation or political actions—the things that get headlines in the newspapers like *hartals*[10] and massive political rallies—are not the ways that most ordinary citizens see as a means to influence their neighborhoods, communities, and country. Rather, it is the more mundane, day-to-day forms of participation like attending a public meeting on town or school affairs, or participating in the activity of a local organization or club. Of the 18 percent who said they had participated in such groups, credit and savings groups topped the list at 21 percent. Sports associations (18%), youth groups (16%), and cultural groups and associations (13%) also seemed to have more of an impact on the lives of individuals compared with other groups.

Only nine percent reported participating in a political group or movement. Labor unions have minimal impact and influence on most people's lives, with only two percent reporting involvement in a trade or labor union within the last year. Only three percent said they had participated in a *hartal* during the last year. In fact, *hartals* received a very cold score of 14 on the 0-100 favorability scale.

View of Political Parties. On the 0-100 favorability scale, "political parties" received a fairly lukewarm score of 44. Only a negligible two percent of the public said that someone being "a member of the best political party" was one of the qualities they look for in a leader, and only one percent said they look for a leader who comes from a family of political leaders. Twelve percent said they are members of political parties.[11] A majority of people (53%) who are not formal members of political parties said that parties use violence to get their way. Nearly one third (32%) agreed with a statement that, at times, they have been threatened by *mastans*[12] to change their vote or political opinions.

---

[10] General strikes.

[11] As mentioned previously, political party membership was explicitly excluded from the nationwide survey. That is, the survey only asked respondents to answer the question, "Are you currently a member of a political party?" It did not ask them to name the party in which they held the membership. It is also important to note that this question was about formal membership rather than affiliation. The percentage of people who affiliate with political parties tends to be much higher than those who are formal members.

[12] Human Rights Watch defines "*mastan*" as "the name given to criminals who sometimes act as musclemen for Bangladesh's political parties in exchange for the parties' tolerance of the mastans' racketeering and other criminal activity. Today the term is used to refer not only to thugs with direct political affiliations but more broadly to powerful criminals," ("Ravaging the Vulnerable," Vol. 15, No. 6[C], August 2003).

Qualitative Results

From 25 January to 7 February 2004, the ARD/SRGB Team conducted 12 focus groups in four divisions. The focus groups, each with a maximum of 10 participants, were representative of a specific category of individual: male/female, rural/urban, age range, education level, and political affiliation.[13]

Findings from the focus groups corroborated the results of the survey, and also provided additional insights that helped in the interpretation of the results of the quantitative survey. For instance, the four-tier hierarchy of concerns was echoed in the focus groups. The focus groups also indicated that the rising cost of living (an issue not tested in the survey) ranked among their most pressing concerns. Also related to Tier 1 concerns was that participants tended to conceptually link education with employment—education was seen as a means to obtaining a better quality of life. More directly related to issues of DG, several focus group participants noted that the unemployed, poor people, and those with little education have fewer rights and less of a voice than do their better-educated, richer neighbors.

Similarly, the focus groups elaborated their understanding of the issues of human and women's rights. For instance, one female focus group participant provided additional insight into how many Bangladesh citizens define "rights." When asked if men and women are equal, she responded "yes," explaining that if she starves, then her husband starves, too. She understood the question of "rights" in terms of the basic essentials required to live.

The focus groups clearly showed a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what when it comes to governance in Bangladesh (specifically, the role of national government versus local government). When participants were asked about where they take their concerns and problems, no clear response emerged. When it came to fixing roads and dealing with other infrastructure problems, the responses were a mix between Members of Parliament and local government officials. One woman said she took her divorce problem to her Member of Parliament; another asked a Member of Parliament to fix a street light in front of her house. The overall conclusion is that the ordinary citizen does not seem to clearly understand how zones of responsibility and authority are delineated between national and local government.

Summary

This may be a prime moment of opportunity for consolidating democracy in Bangladesh. Overall, public perceptions about democracy are positive and fairly strong and the public has high expectations and hopes of what democracy might provide for them. But the public is starting to ask questions about the system. Citizens need help to understand how they can engage with their government between election cycles, to help create demand for good governance day in and day out, and to develop the skills to effectively channel their concerns and interests. In other words, citizens need help in the practice of democracy. The profound gap between very high voter turnout and very low participation in civil society organizations points to an opportunity for USAID to activate and develop an active civil society in the country. There is also an opportunity to help strengthen local government through greater decentralization of responsibility and by ensuring that local government entities have the capacity (both technical and fiscal) to carry out those responsibilities.

[13] Political affiliation, a subject that was purposely avoided in the nationwide survey, was included as a selection criterion for focus groups participation. Recruiting people from similar backgrounds allows focus group participants to be more comfortable and honest about their views than they might if the group was made up of individuals from different backgrounds. In a country like Bangladesh, where divisions between political parties are sharp and often emotional, it was felt that the inclusion of partisan supporters from different political parties would have served as an impediment to obtaining accurate and honest perspectives in a focus group setting. Thus, the ARD/SRGB Team segmented the groups according to the major political parties. In addition, a third of the focus groups were held with individuals who were independent or did not express any affiliation with a particular political party.

1.0 Background and Methodology

The Office of Democracy, Governance, and Education of USAID's Mission in Bangladesh is designed to stimulate, catalyze, and contribute to the development of democracy in the country. Strategic Objective (SO) 9 focuses on making three specific sectors—local government, political parties, and human rights—more democratic, effective, and efficient, and thus more responsive to citizens' needs.[14] Specifically, SO9 will provide three intermediate results (IRs): (i) active constituency for strong elected government created, (ii) greater responsiveness of political parties to citizens' priorities, and (iii) increased recognition of women's rights and children's rights as human rights.

USAID/Bangladesh required quantitative and qualitative information on democracy and governance issues to:

- inform USAID/Bangladesh's strategic planning process;
- establish a baseline to measure progress of USAID/Bangladesh's democracy and governance (DG) activities; and
- provide a useful base of information for donors, policymakers, and civil society.

Market day in Dhaka.

This document reports on the results of a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) National Survey in Bangladesh covering DG issues carried out on behalf of the USAID/Bangladesh. The study was carried out by ARD, Inc. in association with the Survey Research Group of Bangladesh (SRGB) as a task order of the General Democracy and Governance Analytical, Support, and Implementation Indefinite Quantify Contract.[15]

The study consisted of two parts, a statistically designed nationwide quantitative survey of 3,140 adults aged 18 and older, and 12 qualitative focus group sessions.

1.1 Nationwide Survey: Methodology

The survey questionnaire consisted of 171 questions covering issues and views about the general situation in the country; knowledge, attitudes, and practices in democracy, human rights, and women's rights; perceptions of leading government and political institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); views on and practices of corruption and civil society participation; views on political parties[16]; and demographic information. The survey consisted of one-on-one interviews with 3,140 individuals[17] in six divisions conducted between 17 November and 31 December 2003.

To ensure a representative sample, locations for interviews (i.e., the allocation of sample units) were selected using population-proportionate sampling (see Table 1). However, the Chittagong Hill Tracts

[14] USAID/Bangladesh, "DG Performance Monitoring Plan," December 2003.
[15] AEP-I-00-99-00041-00.
[16] It is important to note that the Mission made an explicit decision not to ask respondents to identify their political party. The reasons for this decision are discussed in detail in Section 2.7.2.
[17] 1,570 male; 1,570 female; 1,799 urban; 1,341 rural.

(CHT, with 140 interviews) and the urban areas (with 1,799 interviews) were purposely over-sampled. In the CHT, this over-sampling was intended to ensure that knowledge, attitudes, and practices of this important area were adequately captured.

According to preliminary figures from the 2001 census, the urban population accounts for about 23% of the total population of the country. However, urban respondents represent more than half of our sample.[18] In the urban areas, this over-sampling was done because there was the feeling that urban views greatly influence rural ones in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Sample Allocation by Division

Division Name	Population of Adults Over Age 18 (1990 census, in thousands)	URBAN Actual / Weighted Counts	RURAL Acutal / Weighted Counts	TOTAL Actual / Weighted Count
Barisal	4,407	180 / 20	40 / 182	220 / 202
Chittagong*	12,485	302 / 138	260 / 435	562 / 573
Dhaka	21,543	377 / 340	660 / 649	1,037 / 988
Khulna	7,925	220 / 67	120 / 296	340 / 364
Rajshahi	16,327	520 / 93	141 / 657	661 / 749
Sylhet	4,288	120 / 18	60 / 179	180 / 197
CHT	720	80 / 38	60 / 29	140 / 67
TOTAL	**67,698**	**1,799 / 714**	**1,341 / 2,427**	**3,140 / 3,140**

* Excluding the CHT, which were treated separately.

1.1.1 Quality Control

A number of measures were taken to ensure the accuracy of the survey instrument, the conduct of the survey, and analysis of data. Together, these measures give the ARD/SRGB Team a high degree of confidence in the results.

The survey instrument was translated from English into Bangla with a number of reviews and iterations with hired translators and with USAID and US Embassy staff. In this regard, the ARD/SRGB Team is particularly appreciative of the assistance provided by Dr. Rezaul Haque, USAID Democracy Team Leader, and Mr. Firoze Ahmed, US Embassy Political Analyst. Many long hours poring over several versions of the translation ensured that the Bangla version of the questionnaire said exactly what the Team intended it to say, and in the way the Team intended it to be said. During this process, several back-translations (from Bangla back into English) provided an added level of confidence.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on 48 individuals in Savar, Tongi, Gazipur, Narayangany, and Dhaka City areas. Based on the pre-test results, some questions were modified, others added, and others deleted. The introduction was modified, and some codes were added for responses that had not been anticipated in the initial draft. The translations and back-translations were again checked and re-checked with the help of Dr. Haque and Mr. Ahmed.

SRGB trained 11 field teams over a minimum three-day period before the teams were sent to their respective locations. Each team consisted of five field investigators, one supervisor, and one quality controller.[19] The quality controllers received an additional day of training. Quality control was also

[18] For the survey results described in this report, the weighting drew the urban sample down to 22.7% which is consistent with the 2001 census.

[19] The exception was the team assigned to the CHT, which consisted of three field investigators, one supervisor, and one quality controller.

provided by independent, third party checks of the interview process, including validation of the accurate application of the sample selection methodology. The third-party field check consisted of household-level field checks, re-interviews, and post-enumeration quality checks. A sample of 212 questionnaires (seven percent of the total) was field checked. The results of the third-party check were reported as "very satisfactory."

SRGB's quality controllers checked each questionnaire using a pre-formatted report form prior to submitting it for data entry. Upon receipt in Dhaka, SRGB staff made additional checks of 150 randomly selected questionnaires. Discrepancies were compared to the physical questionnaire and corrected. Data from the first 300 questionnaires were transmitted to ARD for coding of the open-ended questions. These codes were then used on subsequent questionnaires. Data were entered using a "double-entry" method—the data were entered twice by two sets of operators, at two separate physical locations. The final data set was converted to SPSS for data analysis purposes.

1.1.2 Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, the data were weighted by actual population sizes according to the 1990 census. The computation of weights was done to balance the relative representation based on the actual populations of each division, of rural versus urban populations, and by gender. In this way, each individual interviewed is given a multiplier that gives his/her individual opinion less influence (or "weight") if he/she is from an over-sampled category, or more influence if he/she is from an under-sampled category. The 1990 census data was used to compute the weights because detailed information from the 2001 census was not yet publicly available. Once the detailed 2001 census becomes available, USAID may want to re-weight the data using this more recent information. In any case, the total sample size of 3,140 gives a (national-level) sampling error of less than two percent.[20]

1.2 Focus Groups: Methodology

In addition to the quantitative survey, the ARD/SRGB Team conducted 12 focus groups in four divisions from 25 January to 7 February 2004. The focus groups were intended to provide qualitative information, shedding light and providing depth and color to the findings of the quantitative survey.

Focus groups were limited to a maximum of 10 participants; each session was representative of a specific category of individual: male/female, rural/urban, age range, education level, and political affiliation. Table 2 shows the focus group schedule and composition.

Political affiliation, a subject that was purposely avoided in the nationwide survey, was included as a selection criterion for focus groups participation. Recruiting people from similar backgrounds allows focus group participants to be more comfortable and honest about their views than they might if the group was made up of individuals from different backgrounds. In a country like Bangladesh, where divisions between political parties are sharp and often emotional, it was felt that the inclusion of partisan supporters from different political parties would have served as an impediment to obtaining accurate and honest perspectives in a focus group setting. Thus, the ARD/SRGB Team segmented the groups according to the major political parties. In addition, a third of the focus groups were held with individuals who were independent or did not express any affiliation with a particular political party.

[20] Using $N = (z_{a/2})^2 \, s^2 / \pm B^2$ for a normal distribution.

Table 2: Focus Group Schedule and Composition

Date	City	Type	Gender	Ages	Education	Political Sympathy
26 January	Dhaka	Urban	Women	20-29	Passed SSC[21]	BNP
28 January	Chittagong	Urban	Women	30-44	Illiterate	Awami League
28 January	Chittagong	Urban	Men	20-29	Passed SSC	BNP
28 January	Kendua	Rural	Women	45 +	Illiterate	Independent
28 January	Kendua	Rural	Men	20-29	Illiterate	Awami League
29 January	Laksam	Rural	Women	20-29	Illiterate	Independent
29 January	Laksam	Rural	Men	30-44	Illiterate	Jatiya-Ershad
5 February	Parbatipur	Rural	Women	30-44	Illiterate	Jatiya-Ershad
5 February	Parbatipur	Rural	Men	20-29	Illiterate	Jamaat-e-Islami
5 February	Keshabpur	Rural	Women	30-44	Literate, below SSC	Jamaat-e-Islami
5 February	Keshabpur	Rural	Men	45 +	Illiterate	Independent
7 February	Dhaka	Urban	Men	30-44	Literate, below SSC	Independent

A focus group session in Keshabpur.

ARD provided detailed instructions to SRGB for recruiting participants for the focus groups. Participants were re-screened prior to beginning each session. In a few cases, participants were turned away when they did not fit the profile of the group. Even with these steps, it is important to note that focus groups, by their very nature, may not be representative of the population as a whole. And even with a well-trained facilitator, some individuals may be reluctant to express their view if it differs from that of the group or from another participant's with a strong personality. However, the focus group discussions did provide important insights that helped explain some of the apparently counterintuitive results of the survey.

Each session was videotaped and Bangladeshi note takers recorded additional notes. For eight of the 12 sessions, ARD staff viewed the proceedings on a monitor connected to the video camera. Participants were remunerated for their time and were provided refreshments.

1.3 Research Caveats

While the number of quality control measures taken give the ARD/SRGB Team a high degree of confidence in the results, no research is perfect and several caveats must kept in mind when interpreting the results.

The average Bangladeshi interviewed was very interested in the survey and remained interested throughout the average 64 minutes it took to complete. Refusal rates were low—fewer than 50 individuals approached refused to participate in the survey. In many cases, other non-respondents were attracted to the process. The interviewers were well trained in keeping the interview focused on the selected respondent, but there is no question that having other people around will influence a person's answers. Interviewers kept track of who else was around during the interview. These results are shown in Table 3.

[21] Secondary school certificate.

Table 3: Others Present During Interview

Others Present During Interview	Number of Interviews
No one	1,106
Spouse	239
Children	323
A few others	1,048
A small crowd	421
(Not reported)	(3)
TOTAL	**3,140**

The interviewers were also asked to report whether or not the respondent discussed any of the questions with others before giving answers. In 433 cases the interviewer recorded "yes," the respondent discussed at least some of the questions with others. In the other 2,707 cases the interviewer recorded "no." The Team did not try to control either for "crowd effects" or for "discussion effects" during data analysis, although the information is readily available in the SPSS data file should USAID desire such control.

While the ARD/SRGB Team made every attempt to monitor the selection of the respondents at the household level through the third party field check, the Team suspects that the selection process was not always followed precisely in every region. As a result, it appears that the sample contains slightly more educated individuals than is representative of the nation as a whole. This slight over-sampling may be due to interviewers choosing the nicer-looking house in a neighborhood or avoiding unpleasant looking neighborhoods altogether. The effect is small and could be corrected using weighting factors for education. However, the Team did not have any data available to them to carry out such a weighting.

As mentioned previously, the data were weighted using 1990 census information since that was all that was available. If there have been significant shifts in population—such as from rural to urban areas—in the last 10 years, this may shift some of the percentages slightly. USAID may want to re-weight the data using 2000 census information as soon as it becomes publicly available.

As a final note, the sample size of 3,000 (plus 140 additional in the CHT) was selected in order to ensure acceptable error not only at the national level but also when the data are broken out by major subgroups such as gender, urban/rural, and by division (with the CHT being purposely over-sampled for this reason). Analysis of data by minor subgroups, such as occupation, or by split subgroups, such as gender within a division, may not yield statistically valid results and should be considered with caution. One exception is "housewives"—with fully 1,000[22] women reporting to be housewives, this particular occupation category does yield statistically valid results.

[22] This number, seemingly very high, is consistent with percentage of women saying they are housewives in the 1990 census.

2.0 Survey Results

The nationwide survey of 3,140 individuals conducted in November and December 2003 and a set of 12 nationwide focus groups conducted in January and February 2004 convey important insights into how ordinary Bangladeshi citizens understand and view several institutions and concepts key to democratic governance. This report is an analysis that integrates the results of both the survey and the focus groups.

2.1 General Mood and Leading Concerns

The starting point for the ARD/SRGB Team's investigation into public knowledge, attitudes, and practices was a brief examination of the general mood of the country and the public's leading priorities and concerns. This analysis provided a sense of the overall "public opinion environment" in which the research took place.

2.1.1 Sharply Mixed Mood

The overall mood of the country was found to be sharply mixed, with 48 percent of public saying the country is going in the right direction, and 47 percent saying the country is going in the wrong direction. Women were somewhat more optimistic than men about the general situation, and younger citizens had a somewhat more optimistic outlook than that of older generations. The wealthier and more educated an individual was, the more likely he or she was to have a more pessimistic outlook on the general situation in Bangladesh.

Urban residents were much more positive than those living in rural areas, with 60 percent of urban residents saying the country is going in the right direction, but only 44 percent of rural citizens saying the same. This urban-rural split was also present in the 12 focus groups that the Team conducted.

The three divisions with the most negative outlook were Chittagong[23] (37 percent, "right direction") and the CHT (40 percent, "right direction"), a region which has experienced violence, kidnappings, and challenges from a separatist movement; Khulna (44 percent, "right direction") which has seen a spate of crime and violence in recent months; and Barisal (46 percent, "right direction").

Overall, citizens were much more optimistic about the situation in their immediate communities—slightly less than two thirds of respondents (63%) said that things in their immediate communities were going in the right direction, a 15-point gap between those who said the same thing about the direction the country was headed overall.

Table 4: Opinions on Country and Community Direction (in percent)

	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Do you think things in this country are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction?				
Right direction	45	51	60	44
Wrong direction	51	43	35	51
Do you think things are going in the right direction or wrong direction in your immediate community?				
Right direction	62	64	73	60
Wrong direction	36	33	25	37

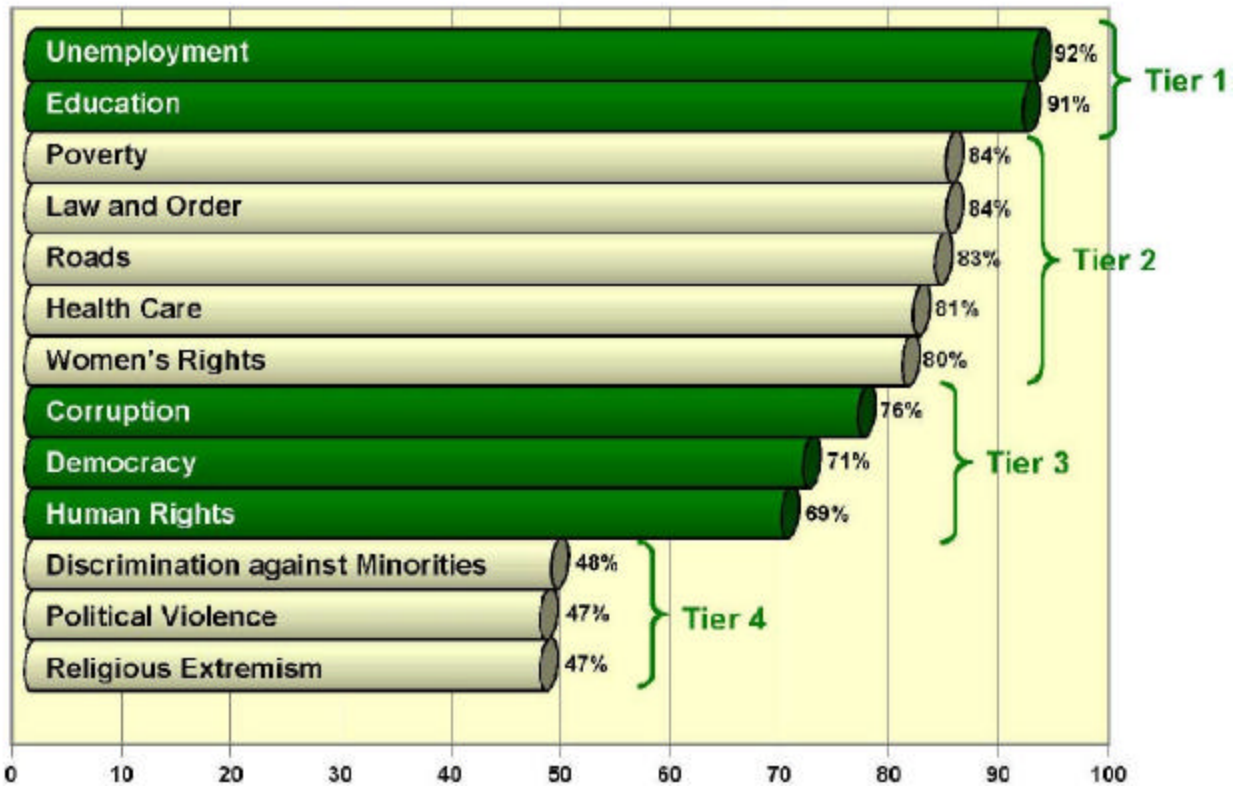
[23] Excluding the CHT.

These "country direction" and "community direction" questions are good "mood barometers" that can help provide an understanding of who are the more optimistic and pessimistic individuals. Since attitudes about democracy, governance, and various political and government institutions do not take place in a vacuum, it is useful to repeat basic mood questions like these to gain an understanding of how the "public opinion environment" shifts over time.

2.1.2 Leading Concerns

Before the research delved into more specific questions about democracy, human rights, and institutions, the ARD/SRGB Team sought to get a sense of the average citizen's leading concerns and top priorities. A series of survey questions and initial focus group questions revealed an interesting hierarchy of concerns, categorized into four general levels or "tiers." The results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Concerns of the Bangladeshi People: Percent that Responded "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" to this Series of Issues



Tier 1 Concerns: Employment, Cost of Living, and Education

As shown in Figure 1, economic issues dominate Bangladeshis' top concerns, and these issues impact dialogues on democracy and popular understanding of human rights. Unemployment was rated as the most important issue, with 92 percent of the public saying it is "very important." Basic concerns such as providing food, shelter, and clothing for their families are also near the top; and a common strand running through the focus groups was a concern about the rising cost of living, especially acute in the rural areas.

Representative Focus Group Responses to "Right Direction/Wrong Direction" Question

"Poor people are suffering from the rising costs of living… The price of rice has gone up, and we are in misery." (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

"Because of the price hikes, we cannot afford to live a smooth life with our income. Because of the price hikes, I think things in the country are going in the wrong direction." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"My income does not match my expenditures. My financial condition is bad." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

"The price of the commodities is growing high. The price of rice is expensive and is beyond our reach." (*Rural woman, Kendua, age 45 or over, illiterate, independent*)

Importance of Education. Education is statistically tied with employment as an important issue, with 91 percent of the public saying that it is "very important." Ordinary citizens tend to see these two issues—basic economic concerns such as unemployment and the cost of living—closely intertwined with education. Focus group participants see education as one key to improving their standard of living, and many demand it for the next generation, if not for themselves.

Representative Focus Group Comments Regarding Education

"I have only one demand—please ask the government to ensure the proper education of the children in schools and colleges." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"Without education, life is not a life. An illiterate is like a dead man." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

Further evidence of the primacy of the right to work and education is found in a series of questions that asked respondents to rank a list of basic rights for individuals that should be respected for people in Bangladesh. The right to education and employment led the list in the first tier of rights, with 96 percent saying education is very important and 95 percent saying the right to employment is very important.

Perception that people with less money and education have fewer rights. Of particular relevance to this research on democracy and human rights is the fact that several focus groups participants made the point that the unemployed, the poor, and those with less education have fewer rights and less of a voice. At the end of the focus groups, the moderator asked participants to provide one recommendation to the prime minister to improve the situation in Bangladesh. Comments from the focus group participants offer signs that poor people believe that they have fewer rights.

Focus Group Participants Discuss Human Rights and Poverty

"We are poor people… What rights can I expect to have?" (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

"We are poor people—the officials will not listen to us." (*Rural woman, Keshabpur, age 30-44, illiterate, Jamaat Islami supporter*)

"The leaders are not poor. The leaders just use the poor for their political purposes. If they want to hold a meeting like this, they bring poor people like us. When the time for elections comes, we poor people get a little more status and attention because they need our vote. When the voting is over, we are forgotten, and we are just kicked out." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

The last comment in the previous text box relates to a topic covered later in this report, the linkage between citizens' rights and responsibilities. As noted below, the fact that some citizens, particularly those with less income and education, believe they have fewer rights may lead them to also believe they have fewer responsibilities, particularly between election periods. The notion of civic participation and average citizens' involvement in political and government affairs appears fairly weak outside the scope of elections.

Tier 2 Concerns: Law and Order, Poverty, Roads, Healthcare, and Women's Rights

The second tier of concerns is led by law and order (with 85 percent saying it is "very important"), poverty (84%), roads (83%), and health care (81%).

These second tier concerns were among the top issues that citizens believe their Member of Parliament should address. When asked in an open-ended question what sorts of things they expect from their Member of Parliament, the leading responses were building infrastructure (53%), followed by eliminating poverty (30%), developing educational institutions (20%), and stopping crime and improving law and order (19%). Another 18 percent believed that their Member of Parliament should help the economy and create jobs. These top expectations for Members of Parliament are all issues that fall into the top two tiers of concerns.

One issue directly related to USAID's democracy and governance portfolio, women's rights, falls into this second tier of concerns, with 80 percent of the public saying that women's rights are very important. This topic is covered more extensively in Section 2.5.2.

Tier 3 Concerns: Corruption, Democracy, and Human Rights

Corruption, democracy, and human rights all fall into the third tier of concerns. This does not mean that the public views these issues as unimportant. On the contrary, strong majorities (at least 80 percent) said that these three topics are either "very" or "somewhat" important.

Feelings about democracy, human rights, and corruption were fairly strong, if sometimes cloudy, but they were ranked lower compared to the most basic daily concerns: employment, law and order, and infrastructure. The Bangladeshi public's relative ranking of top concerns corresponds to Maslow's hierarchy of needs—with the things perceived to provide the most basic physiological needs (work and education as the path to better employment) ranking as the most important, followed by security and safety (law and order).

Public views on these three issues—democracy, human rights, and corruption—are covered in greater detail below.

Tier 4 Concerns: Discrimination against Minorities, Religious Extremism, and Political Violence

The issues falling at the bottom of the list of relative concerns were discrimination against minorities, religious extremism, and political violence.

Although newspaper headlines are filled with stories of political violence, the survey indicates that ordinary Bangladeshis are not as strongly concerned about political violence as they are about other issues. Concern about political violence is somewhat higher in Barisal (with 66 percent saying it is a "very important" issue) and in the CHT (64%).

In a battery of questions on which basic rights and freedoms should be respected, rights of minorities fall toward the bottom of the list. But non-Muslims—Hindus and those of other religious faiths—viewed discrimination against minorities as more important than did Muslims, with 58 percent of Hindus and 78 percent of those of other religious faiths saying discrimination against minorities is a "very important" problem, compared to 46 percent of Muslim citizens. Residents of the CHT were also found to be more concerned about discrimination against minorities; fully 81 percent of CHT residents said they thought discrimination against minorities was "very important."[24]

2.1.3 Strong Public Desire to Move Forward

The Bangladeshi public saw the full set of issues tested at the start of the survey to be important to various degrees, with some having a higher priority than others. The public also has a strong desire to move on and address the many issues and challenges that the country faces.

One indication of this is a question about the 1971 War of Liberation. The format of this question was a statement pair (see question at right). When asked to choose between two alternative statements about the 1971 War of Liberation, a fairly strong majority of people (61%) chose the statement, "The 1971 War of Liberation is part of our history, but we need to move on from talking about it and find real solutions to today's problems." About one in three (29%) agreed with the statement, "We must never forget the events and lessons learned from the 1971 War of Liberation, because it is an important part of who we are."

Demographically, the divide on this statement pair is split fairly evenly. Religious minorities, including Hindus, are slightly more supportive of the statement to never forget the lessons of the War of Liberation, with 40 percent of religious minorities choosing this statement, compared to 28 percent of Muslims.

War of Liberation Question

Instructions: Now I would like you to tell me your views on various issues. I will read pairs of statements, and for each pair, I'd like you to tell me whether you agree more with the first statement or more with the second statement.

Statement 1: We must never forget the events and the lessons learned from the 1971 War of Liberation, because it is an important part of who we are.

Statement 2: The 1971 War of Liberation is a part of our history, but we need to move on from talking about it and find real solutions to today's problems.

Follow-up: Is that strongly agree or somewhat agree?

Support for democracy and democratic forms of government are slightly higher among the 29 percent who agree with the statement not to forget the lessons of the 1971 War of Liberation. Among these respondents, 69 percent chose a democratic form of government over three other alternative forms of

[24] This compares to 42 percent of respondents in the Chittagong Division, excluding the CHT, who said discrimination against minorities is "very important."

government tested, a nine-point difference compared to those who said, "we need to move on from talking… and find real solutions to today's problems."

2.2 Public Views on Democracy

An important part of the ARD/SRGB Team's task was to help USAID gain a deeper understanding into how ordinary citizens define "democracy" and "human rights." The Team approached this in many different ways, and this section offers an analysis on perceptions and understanding of democracy.

2.2.1 Strong Public Support for Democracy

Overall, ordinary Bangladeshis have largely positive associations with democracy. Toward the beginning of the survey, before in-depth questions on democracy and various characteristics were investigated, "democracy" as a concept received a mean score of 64 on the 0-100 favorability scale.[25] The younger generation (adults aged 18-29) had a somewhat more favorable view about democracy, giving it an average score of 66, compared to scores of 62 among those aged 30-44 and 61 among those aged 45 and over.

Another sign of the strong support for democracy came in the responses to a question about the best form of government. Respondents were asked to choose between different possible forms of government, making a restricted choice between four different options. A "government ruled by democratically elected representatives" emerged as the top choice of nearly two thirds (62%) of respondents. About one in five (21%) chose a "government ruled by Islamic law, with respected religious figures as leaders." The other choices were "a government ruled by a military leader who got things done" (11%) and "a non-elected government ruled by specialists, experts and business leaders who know what it takes to develop a country" (3%). (An additional three percent responded "do not know" or refused to respond.)

Men were slightly more likely to choose democracy than women, with an interesting split among the women. Fifty-five percent of housewives chose electoral democracy as their preferred form of government. This was 13 points lower than the 68 percent of women who did not identify themselves as housewives and who selected an electoral democracy as their preferred form of government. Housewives were slightly more inclined to choose a government ruled by Islamic law. Women without children who did not identify themselves as housewives were among the most supportive of democracy out of all of the demographic subgroups analyzed—74 percent chose this form of government. The main factor here, though, may be educational attainment. Women who did not identify themselves as housewives and who do not have children tended to be more educated than other women. The vast majority of religious minority groups, including 80 percent of Hindus, chose democracy as their preferred form of government.

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of how respondents view democracy, the survey asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of ten statements about democracy. The results demonstrate that the public has a fairly strong affinity for democracy on several different levels. Respondents gave democracy strong marks for being the best system for:

- Protecting individuals' rights and freedoms (79 percent saying they strongly agree);
- Ensuring equality of all citizens (69%);
- Providing order and security (69%);
- Keeping the country united (68%); and

[25] On the 0-100 favorability scale, respondents are told that if they feel very favorable ("warm") about an institution or idea, they should give is a score of 100, and if they feel unfavorable ("cool") towards it, they should give it a zero. A 50 means that they are neutral about the concept or institution being measured.

- Solving community problems, because it gives everyone the chance to speak about their concerns and interests (59%).

Fully 84 percent of the public agreed with the statement, "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any form of government," including 69 percent who said that they strongly agreed with this statement. Men were slightly more likely (88%) than women (80%) to agree with this statement, and younger generations were more supportive of this statement than older ones. Education was also a factor; while 76 percent of the lowest educated citizens agreed that democracy is better than any form of government, fully 92 percent of those with at least an SSC certificate agreed.

Despite these divisions, these overall results demonstrate that strong majorities of the public value and respect democracy, and that a fairly strong architecture of democratic values exists.

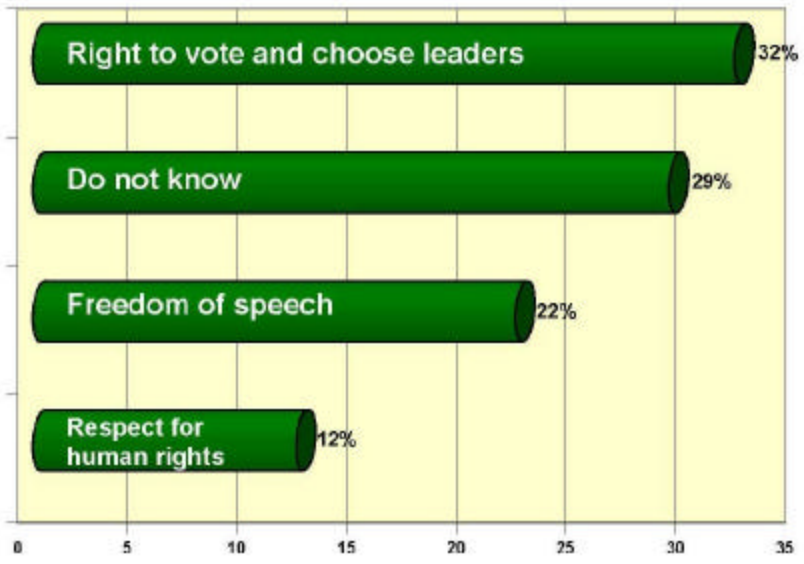
At the same time, the public was divided on several other statements about democracy. The strongest division was found on the statement, "Democracy is a Western idea and is not compatible with our culture and values." A plurality (42%) disagreed that democracy is incompatible, but about one third (31%) agreed with this statement. Another 28 percent said they "do not know." More educated individuals were slightly more likely to agree with the notion that democracy is incompatible.

On the whole, though, the research demonstrates that large majorities of the public have mostly positive associations with democracy.

2.2.2 Public Focused on Elections and Right to Vote

Before delving into the different characteristics that respondents associate with democracy, the survey asked the open-ended question, "What do you understand as democracy?" Respondents were given the option of providing up to three responses. The leading response was the "right to vote and choose leaders in elections" followed by "do not know." Freedom of speech and opinion came in third, followed by respect for human rights (see Figure 2). Men were more focused on defining democracy as the right to vote (37%) than women (28%), and working women without children (45%) were the most likely to define democracy as voting in elections.

Figure 2: Understanding of Democracy



Further evidence of the strong impulse to define democracy almost exclusively as voting was found in the responses to another question aimed at gauging the public's likelihood to vote on a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning that they are certain to vote, and zero meaning that they are certain not to vote. An amazing 80 percent of the public stated that they are certain to vote in the next elections—a strong endorsement of the importance of this act. Findings from the focus group also demonstrated that the public is hyper-focused on their right to vote, and perhaps less cognizant of their role beyond going to the polls every few years.

How Some Focus Group Participants Defined "Democracy"

"We do not hear the word democracy much, but so far as I understand it, it is the right to speak freely and to cast vote according to our will." (*Rural woman, Parbatipur, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"Voting is the main feature of democracy." (*Rural man, Parbatipur, age 20-29, illiterate, Jamaat Islami supporter*)

"We just vote, then it is up to them to do the politics until it is time to vote again." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

"We have the right to vote and we vote, but we don't know what this will bring for us. We just drop it in the ballot box. After that, it is up to the leaders and the politicians." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

The survey also asked respondents to rank a list of basic rights for individuals that should be respected for people in Bangladesh. The right to vote and freedom of speech, which were near the top in the open-ended question on democracy, also appeared in the first tier of basic rights that the public believes should be respected, along with freedom of religion.

Somehow, it has become engrained in the minds of the Bangladeshi public that the right to vote is essential. The challenge for USAID's program in Bangladesh will be to help citizens look beyond elections, organize for their interests between elections, and hold their representatives accountable for their promises after elections. The freedom of association and the freedom to independently form political parties fall to the bottom of the list of rights, ranking even lower than minority rights. This important issue is addressed below.

2.2.3 Hints of Frustration about How Democracy is Practiced in Bangladesh

The research demonstrates that ordinary Bangladeshis strongly support going to the ballot box, but a significant percentage of the population is starting to wonder if their ballot boxes are hooked up to anything, or else they simply lack confidence in their ability as individuals to influence government actions. Specifically, three quarters (76%) of respondents feel they have no influence at all on government actions and policy.

Younger Bangladeshis, who have a slightly more positive outlook and express somewhat stronger support for democracy, were also a bit more negative compared to their older counterparts about the degree of influence they have over government actions and policy. Citizens with higher family incomes and educational attainment were a bit more skeptical about their impact on government compared to poorer, lesser educated citizens. By a 13-point gap, more rural participants said they have no influence at all on government (79%), compared with those living in urban areas (66%).

Concerns about democracy leading to gridlock. One factor that may indicate why people are frustrated with democracy is concerns that too much debate and fighting between different political groups might lead to stasis and no advancement in the general situation. In the survey, a majority of 54 percent agreed with the statement, "Democracies are too indecisive because of constant bickering." More educated people, as well people who said they are formal members of a political party, agreed with this statement than the lesser educated and those who are not members of a party.

The focus groups also indicated some frustration about the way democracy is practiced in Bangladesh, with several participants describing a cycle in which the current government blames the previous government and opposition for problems, and no leader takes responsibility. In the focus groups, the mood about democracy and how politics are currently practiced in Bangladesh seemed to be one of frustration, disappointment, and dashed expectations rather than strong, take-to-the-streets anger, though a handful of participants were clearly angrier than others.

Growing Frustrations about Democracy in the Focus Group Discussions

"One party always blames the other. The party in power blames the party that used to be in power. We don't understand all of these things." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

"I am fed up with the whole government and their promises. Everyone makes promises but they do nothing." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate, independent*)

"Because of democracy, the opposition is given the chance to destabilize the government. Democracy could create anarchy—the opposition tries to destabilize the government two hours into its tenure." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"Those who are in the government work to improve the country, but those in the opposition want to destabilize the country. The opposition creates anarchy*." (Rural woman, Keshabpur, age 30-44, illiterate, Jamaat Islami supporter*)

"Thousands of people died for democracy. We were liberated because we wanted democracy. But we don't have democratic rights and we don't enjoy our freedom. We can't independently move. Nothing called democracy is here." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

Corrupting influence of money in democracy. Another concern among some people was the possibility that democracy, as it is currently practiced, is becoming too corrupt and influenced by money. Although only about one third (36%) agreed with the statement that "more than any other system, democracy opens the way for corrupt people to steal money," several focus group participants raised questions about the corrupting influence that money is having on politics in Bangladesh, which is also related to the earlier point of a common perception that people with less money and education have fewer rights.

Focus Group Participants Discuss the Corrupting Influence of Money on Democracy

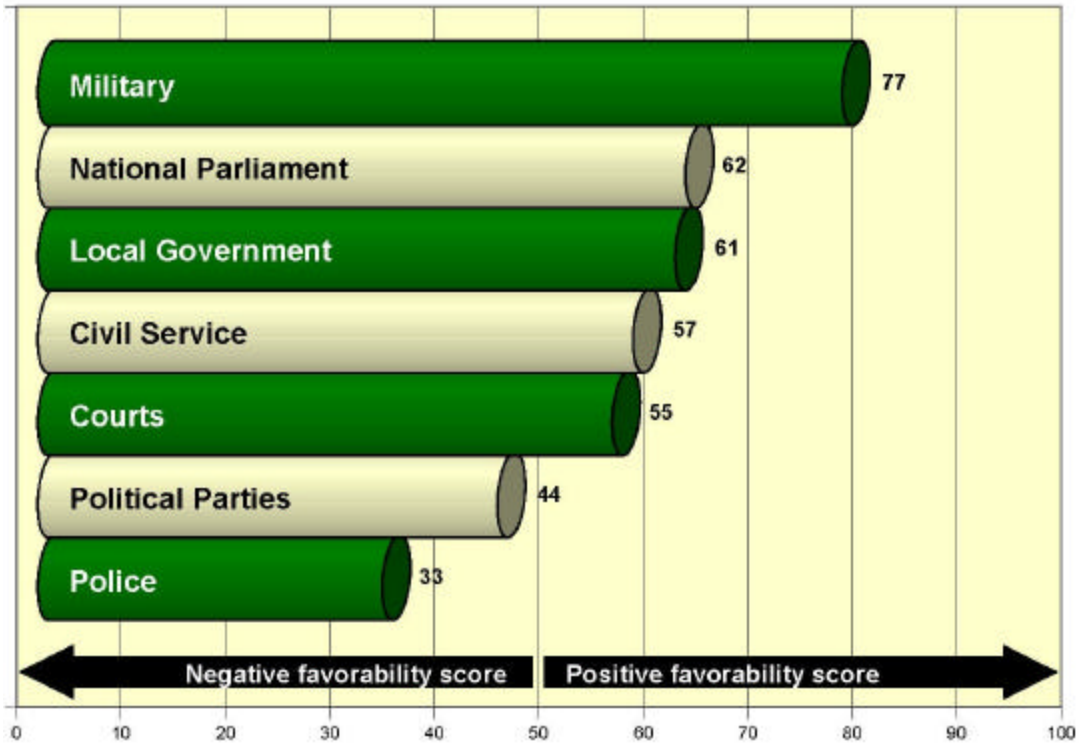
"Democracy means that a government is formed by voting. It is good because we can cast our vote independently. But it is bad that people spend lots of money to contest the election. If ten people contest the election, the man who has much money purchases votes with money*." (Rural man, Kendua, age 20-29, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

"The bad thing is that the election system can be influenced by money in the existing system. The good people don't want to come to this unhealthy competition. The bad people—the people who are not wise—are easily elected because they have money." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

2.3 Perceptions on Leading Government and Political Institutions in Bangladesh's Democracy

The research also examined public attitudes about various institutions key to DG in Bangladesh. The military was found to be the most popular institution out of all of the institutions in government and politics—it receives an average favorability score of 77 on a scale of 0-100, 15 points higher than the next highest ranked institution, the National Parliament (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Mean Favorability Scores of Bangladeshi Institutions



Elected bodies received fairly positive scores. The National Parliament received a mean favorability score of 62, and local government (either the Union Parishad Council or the Municipal Council, depending on the area where the respondent lives) received a score of 61. Just as the younger generation is slightly more positive about democracy, it is also more positive about the main elected institutions of democracy.

The civil service received a mildly positive score of 57 on the 0-100 scale, and the overall view of the courts was just slightly above neutral, receiving a mean score of 55. Political parties, discussed in more detail below, were viewed less favorably than Parliament and local government, with an average score of 44 on the 0-100 favorability scale. Out of all of the institutions of government, the police received the lowest ratings of all with an average favorability score of 33.

2.3.1 Lack of Clarity on Roles of Various Levels of Government

One main point that shines through in the qualitative research is the lack of clarity about which parts and levels of the government are responsible for what. In the focus groups, the ARD/SRGB Team asked participants what the national government and local government are each responsible for, and the only conclusion that the Team can draw from the responses is that the public is quite confused about this subject.

When focus group participants were asked who they take their concerns and problems to, the responses were widely divergent. Some say they take problems related to their community's infrastructure to both the local government council members as well as their Member of Parliament. One woman said she took the problem of her divorce to her Member of Parliament; another said she reported a broken streetlight to her Member of Parliament.

This lack of clarity is connected to the earlier point about the general public's understanding of democracy as voting in elections without comprehending what is supposed to happen and which institutions are responsible for what types of things between elections.

2.3.2 Public Attitudes on Local Government and National Parliament

Bangladesh has two primary institutions of elected government—a National Parliament which has existed since 1991, and elected local governments called Municipal Councils in urban areas and Union Parishad Councils in rural areas. The research offers insights into how ordinary citizens view these two general levels of elected government.

More Familiarity and Contact with Local Government

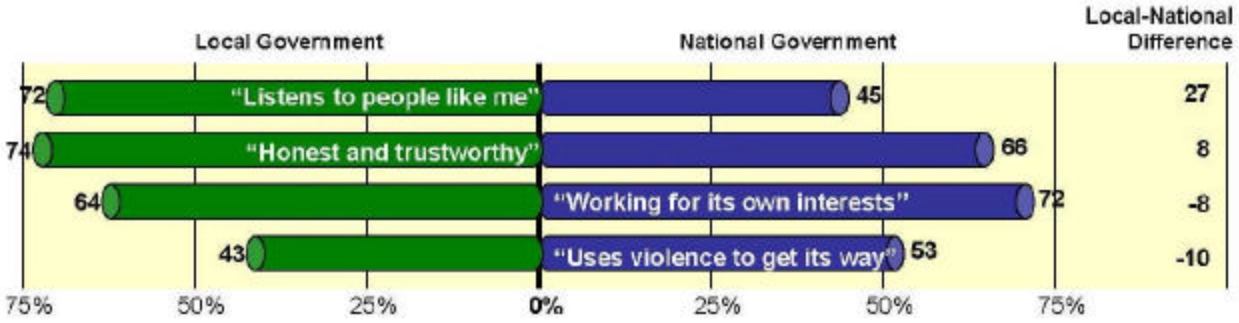
Overall, the public seems more familiar with local government than with National Parliament and their Members of Parliament. One indication of this is the percentage of people who could identify[26] these institutions: 83 percent of respondents could identify the National Parliament, whereas 95 percent could identify the Union Parishad or Municipal Council. As with other results of the survey, this familiarity gap is even wider among lower income and lesser-educated citizens, and among women and older citizens.

Because the public is more aware of their local government bodies, they tend to look there to solve problems. In response to the open-ended question, "Who are the most important leaders that solve disputes and problems and have enough influence to effectively deal with important issues in your community or neighborhood?" the leading response was local government officials at 45 percent. By contrast, 18 percent of respondents chose political party leaders, and 14 percent chose national representatives.

Toward the end of the survey, the ARD/SRGB Team asked a battery of questions related to the different institutions of government, providing a series of attributes and asking respondents whether they agreed or disagreed that the attributes described the National Parliament. Later in the survey, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that a similar list of attributes described local government. A comparative analysis of the results, displayed in Figure 4, indicates that the public tends to see local government slightly more honest and trustworthy, less violent, and more likely to listen to the people than the National Parliament.

[26] "Identify" in this context means the percentage of people who said they have heard of this institution, or who express familiarity with it, as opposed to those who responded "do not know" or "never heard." In this particular case it was the percentage of people who provided a response other than "do not know," "never heard" or "refused" when asked to rank their Member of Parliament or Union Parishad/Municipal Council member on the 0-100 scale.

Figure 4: Comparative Views (in percent) on Local Government vs. National Parliament



Focus group participants confirmed the notion that National Parliament members are not as accessible as members of local government. Several noted that they see their Member of Parliament only during elections.

Focus Group Participants Discuss their Members of Parliament

"Once someone is elected to Parliament, he rarely comes… to see us. During the election, they hug us, offer us tea and biscuits, and when the election is over, they forget us. They give us promises in the elections, and then they forget once they are elected." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"I cannot gain access to my Member of Parliament. Maybe during the elections, he comes to our door, but after the election, we can't take our problems to him. It is not the Member of Parliament's fault; instead, it is the watchmen and the gate men that won't let us in. We're not saying it is the Member of Parliament's fault." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"We are the general public. We cannot talk to the Members of Parliament because there are lots of obstacles and formalities. But the problem is they listen and make promises, but then do nothing." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

"The Union Parishad is like our Parliament here in the local community. We consider it more important than the Parliament." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad Supporters*)

"We know the people in the local elections better. We know that they were good men, so we voted for them because of what we know personally about them." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

Skepticism about Local Government's Power to "Get Things Done"

Although the public sees elected local government officials as somewhat more accessible than Members of Parliament, it remains divided over whether it is better to have a strong central government (47%) or better to give greater authority to the local governments in order to solve the country's problems (43%).

Focus Groups Participants Discuss their Local Government Leaders

"A Union Parishad member doesn't have anything to do. Nowadays, any political activist can reach the minister very easily over the telephone. But no one approaches a Union Parishad member or chairman—they instead approach a minister using their political connections. So the chain of command and administration is broken. Even if a Union Parishad chairman is willing to do things for his area, he cannot do it. He doesn't get the power to do this." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"Since the Member of Parliament is not from the ruling party in this area, the Union Parishad chairmen and members are helpless. They say to us, 'If the government doesn't give us money, where are we going to get the money for development?'" (*Rural Man, Keshabpur, age 45 or above, illiterate, independent*)

The focus groups offer some explanations why. First, as noted above, there was general confusion about which level of government is responsible for which problems. Second, although it seems that people tend to have easier access to local officials, they also notice that they do not have as much power.

2.3.3 Neutral Views on the Judiciary and the Civil Service

Overall views on the judiciary are fairly lukewarm. The public gives the courts a neutral favorability score of 55 on the favorability scale.

A majority of 53 percent said they have "some confidence" in the ability of courts and judges to protect their rights, with only 31 percent saying that they have either complete confidence (15%) or quite a lot of confidence (16%) in the courts' ability to protect their rights. The public's confidence that they would be treated as equally as others is fairly low, with 21 percent saying that they have no confidence at all and 50 percent saying they only have some confidence that the courts and judges would protect their rights.

These tepid attitudes toward the judiciary were confirmed in the focus groups, with many participants expressing complaints of corruption and unequal treatment in the courts, calling to mind comments and views elsewhere in the research that only the rich and educated have rights. Others described the courts as inefficient and lacking the capacity to administer justice in a timely fashion.

Representative Focus Groups Comments on Justice and the Courts

"I don't have anything good to say about them [the courts]. We have to pay money—we have to pay the clerks, the lawyers. You can't do anything without bribes there." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"If you give judges money, you will get the ruling in your favor. Since I'm a poor woman, I can't pay the money, so I won't get justice." (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

Additional Focus Groups Comments on Justice and the Courts

"Our family has a court case going on regarding one of our homes for 14 years. The lawyers and judges take too much time in deciding one case. If these cases would have been decided very promptly, then they wouldn't have a backlog of cases in the judiciary. This case could have been decided in one year—but lawyers and judges drag it out for 14 years." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"The court is a place of harassment—there is a prolonged trial process, and the judges give dates for hearings, and then the dates are changed. Sometimes the judges are not available, and sometimes there are *hartals*, so the trials get delayed." (*Rural man, Keshabpur, age 45 and above, illiterate, independent*)

"The court is a place of bribery." (*Rural man, Kendua, age 20-29, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

The public is similarly lukewarm about Bangladesh's civil service, giving it a mean score of 57 on the 0-100 favorability scale. Complaints about corruption and inefficiency in the civil service were common in the focus groups. But overall, the image of the civil service is fairly neutral and some ordinary Bangladeshis accept the possibility that "government administration and regulation improves the quality of life of average citizens." Fifty-two percent agree with this statement and only 34 percent chose the alternative statement that "government adds nothing but unnecessary red tape and corruption."

2.3.4 Positive Views on Military, but No Desire to Broaden its Mandate

Out of all of the government and political institutions tested, the military has the best image, and Operation Clean Heart[27] helps explain this. Fully 92 percent agreed with the statement that "to maintain law and order, it is necessary to employ the combined forces," with 83 percent of the public strongly agreeing with this statement. In nearly every single focus group conducted, the military received praise from participants for fighting criminals and restoring order in Operation Clean Heart.

But the public does not see the military as the answer to community problems—only two percent of the respondents said that they turn to military personnel solve problems and disputes in their communities. In fact, in the focus groups, participants expressed the worry that if the military stayed around in their communities, they would become just like the police force, which is not viewed in a positive light.

Focus Group Participants Talk about the Army

"The army doesn't take bribes. If they are given as much power as the police, we don't know if their attitude of refusing bribes would change. But until now they don't ask for bribes." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"The army is for the protection for the country, not for law and order. If the army plays that role, they would become greedy like the police." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

[27] Operation Clean Heart was a controversial program lauched in October 2002 to crack down on corruption, crime, and domestic terrorism in Bangladesh. By coordinating the efforts of the country's military, police, and civil administration (the "combined forces") in a concentrated fashion—deploying tens of thousands of soliers across the country at one time—the program apprehended thousands of suspected domestic terrorists and violent criminals and recovered many illegal weapons. Most of the controvery surrounding the operation had to do with allegations of human rights violations, including allegations that some prisoners were tortured to death. Additional controvery surrounded allegations that some individuals were apprehended for their political affiliations rather than for criminal activities.

2.3.5 Special Challenges with the Police in Bangladesh

Bangladesh faces a special governance challenge with the police, which is the least popular of all government and political institutions tested, receiving a cool favorability score of 33 on the 0-100 scale. Both the survey and focus groups demonstrate that the police's main image problems center on perceptions of involvement in corruption and violence. Nearly nine in ten respondents (89%) said that they have to pay a bribe to get help from the police, and three quarters (77%) agreed with the statement that if they go to the police, then the police cause problems for them and their families. In addition, a majority (53%) agreed with the statement that they fear going to the police because it puts them at risk of physical harm. The focus groups vividly illustrated the strong feelings of enmity and distrust that the public has for the police.

Focus Group Participants Discuss the Police

"The police themselves are the worst terrorists." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"Sometimes the police take people and torture them before they go to trial. The police do it to get extra income—they think that if they torture someone, the family will pay them to stop the torture." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"I know about an incident when a policeman took a two *taka* bribe from someone." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"The police are worse than the terrorists of our country because they take people and torture them." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"The police are licensed *mastans*." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, Illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

2.4 Serious Public Concerns about Corruption

With Transparency International ranking Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world for the third year in a row in 2003, corruption is a major issue in Bangladesh. This research indicates that corruption is a cross-cutting theme that touches upon many aspects of life in Bangladesh.

2.4.1 Challenges in Gauging Public Sentiment on Corruption

Even with "survival" (e.g., food, housing, employment, and security) issues so important in the average Bangladesh citizen's day-to-day life, corruption still ranks high with 76 percent of respondents saying that it is a "very important" issue. It is important to note that the ARD/SRGB Team purposely and consciously used the word "*durnity*" (a somewhat more formal and perhaps academic Bangla term) for "corruption" in the questionnaire, as it best represented the "opinion parameter" that USAID wanted to track over time.

Findings from the focus groups indicate that *durnity* may be a difficult word for certain groups to understand. In the more open-ended introductory section of the focus group discussions, several participants colorfully described numerous instances of bribery (*gush*) in their everyday lives—paying bribes to get a job, giving money to teachers for good grades, and paying off judges and other court officials to receive favorable rulings. But later in the discussion, when the focus group moderator introduced the term *durnity*, several focus group participants, particularly those with lower educational attainment, struggled to respond.

The struggle some participants had with understanding the word *durnity* may explain why "corruption" fell into the third tier of concerns, rather than the first or second. However, future surveys, to provide comparable results, will need to take equal care with the use of this word.

2.4.2 Measuring the Scope and Impact of Corruption

Ordinary Bangladeshis see corruption as a problem that has increased in the last year, and a substantial portion state that their lives have been directly impacted by an incident of corruption. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) said corruption (*durnity*) has increased over the last year, and another 13 percent said it has stayed the same. Nearly a third (32%) said corruption has decreased. More richer than poorer Bangladeshis said corruption has increased, and more people who are part of Bangladesh's non-Muslim religious minority said corruption has increased.

Fully 18 percent said they have experienced an incident of corruption that directly impacted their lives. When asked where most of their money goes when they pay bribes, the police was the leading response after "do not know" and "never had to pay a bribe." Other responses are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Percent Responses to Open-ended Question, "Where does most of your family's money go when you have to spend money on bribes and corruption?"

	Total	Urban	Rural
Police	10	9	10
Electricity Department	3	1	4
Land Office	3	2	3
Schools/Education Department	2	1	2
Judiciary/Courts	2	2	2
Elected Local Government	1	1	1
Bank	1	0	1
Other	4	3	4
Do Not Know	44	52	41

These results indicate that corruption is a major problem in Bangladesh and confirm the findings of other organizations, such as Transparency International. Corruption emerged as a dominant theme and leading concern both in the survey and in the focus groups. Corruption clearly impacts the lives of broad segments of the Bangladesh population in negative ways.

Several points help to elucidate the seeming contradiction between the high number of respondents who believe that corruption is a problem and the much lower number who reported experiencing a specific incident of corruption within the last year. Specifically, the *perception* of corruption is much stronger than reported instances of actual corruption. The specific question on personal experiences is time-bound, focused on actual instances of corruption in the last year. It is expected that this type of question would result in a lower figure. The perception of corruption (that one *would* have to pay a bride) is quite different from the actual experience of it (that one *did* pay a bribe). While almost nine in ten (89%) respondents believe they would need to pay a bride to receive help from the police, slightly less than one in five (18%) reported a specific incidence of corruption directly impacting their lives in the last year.

Definitions of corruption vary from one individual to the next, and there are differences in terminology between the words "bribe" (*gush*) and "corruption" (*durnity*), both which were purposely used in the survey. Whereas one person may not report a corrupt act for fear of retribution, another may not even consider the same act to be corrupt. Bribes (*gush*) may be seen as the only way to get something done in a timely fashion, while *durnity* is often associated with activities not always associated with the "common

person." Any of these differences in definition would contribute to under-reporting of specific incidences of corruption.

2.4.3 Views on the Most Corrupt Institutions

The results of the KAP survey indicate that the esteem that ordinary people have for particular government and political institutions is closely linked to perceptions about how corrupt particular institutions are perceived to be. The public generally has a negative view on the government's overall record on corruption, expressed by one middle-aged Dhaka man in a focus group who said, "The Golden Bangla has been smuggled by the government; only the Bangla remains."

According to responses to an open-ended question, the most corrupt institution is the police with nearly half of respondents (47%) choosing the police as the most corrupt (Table 6). The police also had the lowest favorability score out of all institutions tested.

Table 6: Total Answering Open-ended Question, "In your opinion, which institutions or organizations are the most corrupt in Bangladesh?

Institution	Total Responding (Percent)*
Police	47
Courts	11
Schools, Education Department	8
Electricity Department	6
Health Department	4
Ministry+	3
Political Parties	3
Land Office	3
Customs	2
NGOs	2
Tax Department	2
Other (each mentioned 1% or less)	9
Do not know	29

* Total adds to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to give up to two answers.

+ Some responses, like "Ministry," are vague because respondents were allowed to say whatever was on their mind.

Notably, the organizations viewed as most corrupt were either in the executive or judicial branches of government. Only one percent of the public named the elected National Parliament as the most corrupt institution. Similarly, a negligible one percent cited elected local government as the most corrupt.

2.5 Attitudes on Women's Rights and Human Rights

Women's rights fell into Tier 2 of overall concerns that Bangladeshis have in the broad range of 13 issues tested at the start of the survey. Fully 80 percent of citizens said women's rights are "very important," and the gender split on this is worth noting. While 85 percent of women said women's rights are "very important," 74 percent of men say the same—an 11-point gap.

2.5.1 Overall Sense of Equal Rights

Three quarters of the public (76%) said women and men have equal rights and freedoms—one in five (22%) said they do not have equal rights and freedoms. This view is consistent across most demographic and geographic segments.

The poll and focus groups offer some findings on how ordinary people define "basic rights" and "human rights," offering signs that may help further elucidate what ordinary citizens mean when they respond to questions such as this one. In an open-ended question, the survey asks respondents what they understand by the phrase "basic human rights." Fully 44 percent said they "do not know," emphasizing again the knowledge and awareness gap that exists (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Open-ended Definitions of "Basic Human Rights" (in percent)

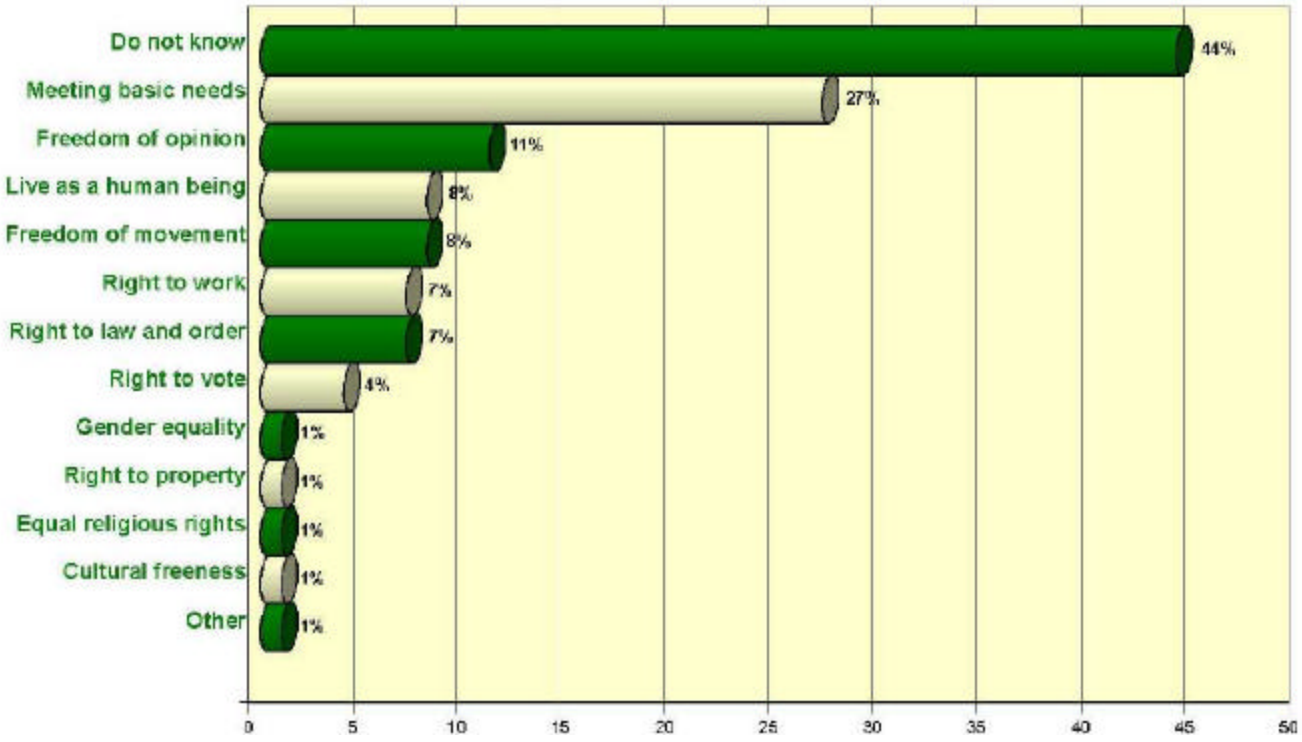


Table 7 shows how the responses to this question vary by the key demographic variables of gender, age, and education. As Table 7 indicates, women are less familiar with basic human rights, as are older and less educated individuals.

Table 7: Leading Definitions of "Basic Human Rights" by Key Demographics (in percent)

	Total	Men	Women	Age			Education		
				18-29	30-44	45 +	Illiterate-primary	High School	HSC and up
Do Not Know	44	39	49	40	45	49	63	46	24
Meeting Basic Needs	27	28	26	35	23	20	15	24	42
Freedom of Opinion	11	12	10	8	13	14	7	11	15

After "do not know," the second leading response to the question of how to define "basic human rights" was "meeting basic needs"—the essentials of life, including food, shelter, and clothing. This may explain in part what respondents were thinking when the survey asked them whether they thought women and

men have equal rights. Their definition of human rights is one that seems to focus on social and economic rights, rather than political rights and civil liberties. This is confirmed in the focus groups.

Representative Focus Group Comments on "Basic Human Rights"

"If I am starving, my husband will also starve. So we [men and women] are equal." (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

"Food and shelter—those are the basic rights. There are still some people who die of hunger." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

"The right to food, education, and shelter are rights of the citizen. But we do not enjoy these rights." (*Rural woman, Kendua, age 45 and above, illiterate, independent*)

With popular conceptions of human rights focusing on social and economic rights rather than on political and civil rights, the public tends to place the burden for ensuring these rights on the government. A majority of respondents (62%) agreed with the statement, "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for," rather than agreeing with the alternative statement, "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves" (24%).

Those at the lowest income levels—respondents from households with monthly incomes below 2,000 *taka*—more strongly agreed that the government is responsible, with three quarters (75%) saying that the government should take more responsibility to provide for everyone. A point worth further exploring in future research includes the meanings of the words "equal" and "rights."

2.5.2 Sense of Progress about the Status of Women

Seven in ten respondents (71%) said that women are better off compared to five years ago, 50 percent said they are "somewhat" better off, and 21 percent said they are "much" better off. A slightly higher percentage of women than men said that the status of women has improved over the last five years. More Muslims said women are better off (73%) than did Hindus (62%) or those practicing other religions (57%).

Among those who said women are better off, the leading reasons centered on increased employment and educational opportunities for women—again, pointing back to the importance of these two issues overall. Employment and education are viewed as important basic human rights, as well as a key to women's empowerment and enhanced status. The leading responses to an open-ended question on why the status of women has improved were increased workforce participation (41%), increased education (40%), and improved freedom for women to travel and move (16%). Key political rights—women's freedom to vote and to express opinions freely—fell at the bottom of the list, receiving only two percent and one percent, respectively.

For the 16 percent who said women are worse off, concerns about declining safety and security were the top reasons cited, with 39 percent saying that the situation is less safe and another 22 percent saying that torture and abuse of women has increased. The lack of freedom to travel and move was the third most important reason for explaining why women are worse off, at 14 percent for all respondents. Among women who said women in Bangladesh overall are worse off, the lack of freedom to travel ranked second after concerns about safety.

Concerns about Violence against Women

Most (87%) of the Bangladeshi public recognized and said that they had talked about "the issue of violence against women in Bangladesh." More respondents with higher incomes and higher educational attainment said they talked about the issue than did poor respondents or those with lower educational attainment. In the focus groups, participants struggled with the question of violence against women. Some said advances have been made in recent years to fight the problem of domestic violence. Some offered comments justifying beatings and abuse. Others said poverty and unemployment are factors contributing to abuse in the home.

Focus Group Participants Discuss Violence against Women

"Unemployment is the main reason for poverty, and this leads to wife beating. If a husband is unemployed, it often makes wives annoyed. This prompts a wife to quarrel with her husband. It hurts the husband's ego, and this causes him to beat his wife." (*Rural man, Keshabpur, age 45 or above, illiterate, independent*)

"Husbands can beat their wives—it is usual and natural." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

"If I ask her not to go somewhere, to visit her father's house today, then I think it is okay to beat her. According to Islam, even if her father dies, she cannot leave the husband's home without permission of the husband. If the husband doesn't permit, she cannot go anywhere." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"Women should devote most of their time to the family, and if they don't they should be punished. Sometimes we get angry and 'something' could happen." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

"Torture for dowry" was the leading response at 38 percent to an open-ended question on how respondents define violence against women. This is followed by physical torture (29%), rape (23%), acid throwing (19%), and torture by husband (18%). The focus groups confirmed that the general public has a strong concern about the issue of "torture for dowry." In nearly every focus group, when asked about the status of women and the issue of violence, participants pointed to the problem of wives being tortured by their husbands and in-laws for dowry.

Focus Group Participants Discuss Marriage Dowries

"The middle class can't pay a proper dowry, and their daughters are tortured because of this. This is increasing at an alarming rate. Sometimes the father can't pay enough to the groom, and because of this the groom tortures the woman." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"Dowry is a serious problem. At least 20,000 *taka* are needed as dowry for the wedding of the daughter, and a motorcycle is also demanded as dowry, even though in Islam dowry is prohibited. To pay for the dowry in the marriage of our daughter, we have to compensate it through the dowry we receive in our son's marriage." (*Rural woman, Keshabpur, age 30-44, literate below SSC, Jamaat Islami supporter*)

"I was married three years ago. When my husband married me… he took 13,000 *taka* as dowry, as well as land. But my mother-in-law always tortured me verbally and physically so that they could collect more money as dowry from the other party if their son would not marry me… My husband is greedy, so he married another woman and left me with a minor child. I am so helpless. I cannot file a case against my husband because I am afraid he will snatch my small baby in anger. Now I stay with my mother and we are struggling in poverty." (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

These initial results require further investigation. Violence against women, particular domestic violence, is a sensitive area of opinion research, and the focus groups demonstrated that it is understandably difficult to get people to talk directly about these issues.

2.6 Fairly Weak Civic Participation

One weak link in popular attitudes and practices in Bangladesh's democracy is civic and associational life. Though the public strongly supports the right to vote, it does not seem to have a clear idea of its role between elections and how to channel its energies and organize its interests. The notion of constituents holding their representatives accountable for promises seems absent. Based on the survey results and comments in the focus groups, citizens tend to view themselves as supplicants, rather than constituents. The survey results even show signs of a small *decline* in civic participation.

2.6.1 General Views on NGOs and Civil Society Groups

At the start of the survey, the ARD/SRGB Team asked respondents to rank NGOs on the 0-100 favorability scale. NGOs received a slightly favorable but generally average score of 58. Women were slightly more favorable toward NGOs than were men, giving them a mean score of 61 compared to 55 from men. Also, those who gave "democracy" higher favorability scores tended to also give NGOs a higher favorability score.

Views expressed in the focus groups on NGOs were mixed, with some noting that NGOs have done positive things for the community and others expressing concerns about corruption in NGOs.

Focus Group Quotes Regarding NGOs

"NGOs are working for the people. They train us to learn things like stitching. They give us a sewing machine, and we have to repay the money in installments. They give the training free of cost. Also, they paid us 600 *taka* during the training period." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

"They took money from abroad and distributed among themselves. The leaders of the NGOs are locked in disputes over the distribution of that money and file cases in courts against each other." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"People work individually for the benefit of others, without benefit to themselves. But no organization works for the people's benefit. All organizations work for their own benefit." (*Urban man, Dhaka, age 30-44, literate below SSC, independent*)

2.6.2 Community Participation

The KAP survey results indicate that participation in community groups is in slight decline, with the vast majority of respondents (71%) saying that they have never taken part in community groups in the last five years. This figure is similar to the percentage of people who say that they have no influence on government actions and policy (76%). Table 8 offers some comparisons between different demographic subgroups on community participation—women were more likely than men to report never taking part in community groups, and younger and lesser-educated citizens were less engaged than were older and more educated ones.

Table 8: Community Group Participation (in percent) versus Five Years Ago

Respondents' participation in community groups	Total	Men	Women	Age			Education		
				18-29	30-44	Age 45+	Illiterate-Primary	High School	HSC and Above
More now	6	9	3	7	6	7	4	7	8
Less now	16	20	11	15	16	17	9	16	21
Same	5	9	2	3	8	6	4	4	8
Never have participated	71	61	82	73	70	67	81	72	62

Among those who have participated in community affairs, 16 percent said they had taken part in fewer community groups than five years ago. Only six percent indicated an increase in participation in the last five years. Only five percent said that the number of community groups and organizations they took part in has stayed the same over the last five years.

Community Group Participation Connected to Everyday Life, not Politics

Civic participation is focused on things most directly connected to everyday life. The most ostensible forms of political participation—the actions that receive attention in newspaper headlines like *hartals* (general strikes) and massive political rallies—are not the ways that most ordinary citizens see as a means to influence their neighborhoods, communities, and country. Rather it is the day-to-day forms of participation that stand out more strongly, like attending a public meeting on town or school affairs (25%) or participating in the activity of a local organization or club (18%). Fully 15 percent said they had contacted a government official at either the local or national level or a political party representative.

About one in ten reported attending a political rally or speech (13%) or working on a political campaign (10%), which was about the same percentage as those who reported being political party members (12%). Again, it is important to keep in mind that these are percentages of percentages (i.e., percentages of the much smaller subset of respondents who said they participate in community groups at all).

In all of the possible forms of community participation tested in the survey—from going to political rallies to taking part in the activities of a local club or organization—more men than women said they participated in these activities. In some cases, the percentage of men who said they participated was double that of women.

It is important to note that a substantial gap exists between the percentage of people who said they voted in the last election and are certain to vote in the next election ("core" voters), and the percentage of people who participated in community activities. Core voters represent about 69 percent of the population, but only about two in ten citizens said they participated in some form of community activity or group. This gap is generally present in most democracies, but it seems more pronounced in Bangladesh.

In the survey, 18 percent of the public said they had participated in the activity of a local organization of club at least once in the last year. The survey further probed that 18 percent by asking an open-ended question to determine which organizations citizens were involved with. Credit and savings groups topped the list at 21 percent.

Credit and savings groups. Several focus group participants noted the good work these organizations have done, though the way they described micro-credit organizations made it seem as if these organizations act more like banking institutions than NGOs. A couple of women mentioned that the credit and savings groups also taught them embroidery and how to save money. Some focus group participants mentioned concerns that the interest they charge was too high. One man in Keshabpur said essentially that he was robbing Peter to pay Paul: "Gradually my debt is increasing. I have to take loans from other places to pay this loan from the micro-credit program because of the high interest rates." In any case, these organizations are not the type of advocacy or special interest organizations that might participate in democratic policy debates.

Focus Groups—More on NGOs

"I have never been to any NGO. In our community, there is Grameen Trust. Although I'm not a member of it, I have seen that they have given credit to the poor people, and with that money, they can solve some of their problems. But the rate of interest is sometimes very high." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter)*

"Once my wife took an NGO loan. They take interest and exploit us." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

"The poor people don't have money to undertake any project. The NGOs provide them with the money in micro-credit programs." (*Rural man, Keshabpur, age 45 or above, illiterate, independent*)

Other civil society organizations (CSOs). After credit and savings organizations, sports associations (18%), youth groups (16%), cultural groups (13%), and school management committees (11%) were the community organizations mentioned most often. Labor unions seem to have minimal impact and influence on people's lives, as they were mentioned by only two percent of the people who said they were involved with the activities of an organization or club in the past year.

The survey found very little popular support for and involvement in *hartals* (general strikes), which receive an average favorability score of 14 on the 0-100 scale. Only three percent said they had participated in a *hartal* during the last year.

These results indicate that civic participation in Bangladesh is limited and focused on local clubs and activities, and political participation goes from one extreme to the other. On the one hand, vocal groups advocate for their particular interests in ways that are unpopular with the vast majority of the public in Bangladesh, and most ordinary citizens are disengaged from these forms of political participation. On the other hand, the vast majority of the public, though they have numerous concerns and demands and exhibit strong participation in Bangladesh's electoral process, only engage in community groups to get a micro-credit loan or engage in a sport or hobby.

The public generally does not see democracy as an ongoing process. These findings on civic participation reinforce other findings from the research (i.e., that the public is strongly focused on voting in elections and ranks the right to organize associations and political parties as a low priority). Among 12 different basic rights and freedoms tested in the survey, the freedom of association (freedom to form and participate in civic groups and independent organizations) ranked next to last, with 55 percent considering it as a very important right.

2.7 Views on Political Parties

Specific political parties represent a challenge and opportunity for consolidating Bangladesh's democracy. The research found that political parties have a fairly lukewarm to cool image among the general public, with only one in ten adults saying they are formal members of the political party. Though the survey did not examine political affiliation and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of specific political parties, it did confirm that a strong divide exists between different parties.

2.7.1 General Public Image of Political Parties

"Political parties" as an entity received a somewhat cool average favorability score of 44. This rating is fairly stable across all demographic subgroups, although poorer people generally gave political parties a higher rating than did their richer counterparts.

Because the survey did not ask respondents to specify their political affiliation[28] (see Section 2.7.2 below), some constraints exist in interpreting the results on "political parties." Because individuals tend not to think about the concept of "political parties" in the abstract, these questions become slightly more theoretical than would have been questions about specific parties.

For the vast majority of the general public, political party affiliation does not seem to matter in making their voting decision. Only a negligible two percent of the overall public, including those who are political party members, said that someone being a member of the best political party is one of the qualities they look for in a leader. One percent of the public said they look for a leader who comes from a family of political leaders.

The image of political parties among people who are not formal members is mixed. Majorities of the public who are not formal members of political parties described political parties as self-interested (with 73 percent agreeing that "working for its own interests" describes political parties), having good ideas (68%), and honest and trustworthy (61%). Fully six in ten (61%) agreed that political parties choose their leaders democratically.

[28] Respondents were only asked whether or not they were a member of a political party. They were not asked to specify which political party.

One troubling result is that a 53 percent majority of those who are not currently members of political parties believe that political parties use violence to get its way. This is particularly strong among nonmembers living in the CHT (78%) and Khulna (60%).

2.7.2 Views of Political Party Members on Their Party and Other Parties

The nationwide survey also included questions about political parties in general, as an institution. It is important to note that the Mission made an explicit decision not to ask respondents to identify their political party. That is, the survey only asked respondents to answer the question, "Are you currently a member of a political party?" It did not ask them to name the party in which they held the membership.[29]

This decision was based on a range of factors. It was felt that political party affiliation information tended to overshadow the survey results and could lead to misinterpretation and over-representation by minor parties. USAID wanted a clear idea of people's attitudes in general so that the information could be used by a wide range of individuals and groups, including the political parties themselves. USAID also wanted the survey instrument to be used on a periodic basis over the medium and long terms to track trends, and felt that it should not be excessively colored by political party positions, which in Bangladesh tend to be very rigid. Finally, there were other surveys in which the respondents were identified by political party affiliation, such as pre-election surveys and specific political party surveys. USAID wanted to avoid duplication and take a fresh look at how people view political parties in the institutional sense.

Among the 12 percent of the public who said they are members of political parties, a substantial gap exists in terms of how they view their own political party versus other political parties. Among partisans, the strength of support for their party is fairly intense, with half (51%) saying that their support is very strong, and another one third (33%) saying that their support is somewhat strong.

The survey posed two separate sets of questions to those who reported being political party members. First, the ARD/SRGB Team asked whether respondents agreed that each of a series of phrases describes their own political party, and later the Team asked whether a similar series of phrases describes other political parties. The results, displayed in Table 9, demonstrate that substantial gaps exist between how party members view their own party versus how they view other political parties.

Table 9: Comparative Attributes: Own Political Party vs. Other Political Parties

	% Who Agree Describes Own Political Party	% Who Agree Describes Other Political Parties	Own Party-Other Parties Difference
"Uses violence to get its way"	31	61	-30
"Honest and trustworthy"	86	56	30
"Offers good ideas for addressing the country's problems"	91	65	26
"Cares about people like me"	84	61	23

The results in Table 9 demonstrate a partisan divide that naturally exists in most democracies. Perhaps what is surprising about these results is the absolute numbers associated with these attributes, rather than the comparison between the numbers on their own parties versus other parties. For example, the fact that almost two thirds (65%) of political party members agree that other political parties offer good ideas for addressing the country's problems is a bit surprising and seems high. This may demonstrate that partisans

[29] This question was about formal membership rather than affiliation. The percentage of people who affiliate with political parties tends to be much higher than those who are formal members.

are fairly receptive to the notion that other parties might have something to offer them. Nevertheless, the divide on perceptions about violence and corruption within their own parties versus other parties is somewhat troubling.

Again it is important to note that the questions on political parties in this research were fairly generic and centered on membership rather than affiliation. In most democracies, the percentage of people who affiliate with political parties tends to be much higher than those who are formal members, and in a future survey USAID may want to consider conducting research along affiliation lines, rather than general party membership.

2.8 The Media

General views on the media were fairly positive, though segments of the population question the media's capacity and neutrality. Overall, the public gave the media a mean favorability score of 68 on the 0-100 scale, demonstrating that it has a more positive image than most government institutions (except the military). Younger Bangladeshis gave the media more positive ratings (a mean score of 71 among 18-29 year olds) than did the older generation, which gave the media a mean score of 64.

Out of 12 different sources of information tested, government television was deemed the most important by 39 percent of the population, followed by newspapers (25%), radio (13%), and private television (6%). Table 10 offers results from different key population segments.

Table 10: Leading Sources of Information (in percent)

	Total	Urban	Rural	Age			Education		
				18-29	30-44	45 +	Illiterate-primary	High School	HSC +
Government Television	39	40	38	43	39	32	48	44	26
Newspapers	25	20	26	25	23	24	10	22	41
Radio	13	24	10	12	14	18	19	13	8
Private Television	6	3	7	6	7	4	4	6	7

The survey found that a respectable degree of trust exists for government-owned media as a source of information, but the findings from the focus groups indicate that some degree of skepticism and concern about possible politicization of the government media also exists.

Fully 86 percent of the public said they find the government media either completely trustworthy (20%) or somewhat trustworthy (65%). Only three percent of the public said that government media is completely untrustworthy. Nevertheless, some participants in the focus groups expressed concerns about the neutrality and accuracy of the government media, particularly the television.

Focus Group Participants Talk about Television, their Major Source for Information

"Television has become two boxes, one each for each of the leaders. BTV has become a box for Khaleda Zia—when she is in power she uses it for her publicity, and when Sheikh Hasina is in power, she uses it for her own purposes." (*Urban woman, Dhaka, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"I think that television is politicized—the government interferes in television. Most newspapers are free, except for the government newspaper. Since there are so many newspapers, we can browse all of them to get the real information." (*Urban man, Chittagong, age 20-29, passed SSC, BNP supporter*)

"If ten people die in an accident, the state-run television will say that five people died." (*Rural man, Keshabpur, age 45 or above, illiterate, independent*)

2.9 Practices

The survey contains results that help provide an understanding of a number of practices related to democracy in Bangladesh. First, as already mentioned, ordinary citizens have a strong sense that they have the right to vote, and they view this right as sacred. Fully 97 percent said that it is never justified to vote more than once in an election. A similar percentage believes that voting is a powerful way to influence the direction of government. The act of voting came out, by far, as the strongest democratic practice of the average Bangladeshi citizen.

Almost three quarters (74%) agreed with the statement, "It is important to listen to and respect the opinions of others who don't agree with you," including 45 percent who strongly agree with this statement. These figures provide encouraging signs that a key democratic practice—respect for others' opinions—is dominant among a significant portion of the population.

However, the sense of individual citizen initiative that is present in many democratic societies is not as strong in Bangladesh. Fewer than two in ten respondents said they have participated in most forms of political and community participation tests in the survey. Attendance at public meetings on town or school affairs was the most popular form of participation, with 25 percent of the population saying they have attended such a meeting during the past year. Furthermore, a fairly strong majority (62%) believes that the government should take more responsibility for providing basic human services, compared to only 24 percent who said that people should take their own responsibility.

Finally, there are troubling signs about societal acceptance of violence. Nearly all respondents said that it is sometimes justified to get things done through violence.

2.10 Summary of Results

This may be a prime moment of opportunity for consolidating democracy in Bangladesh. Overall, public perceptions about democracy remain positive and fairly strong, and the public has high expectations and hopes of what democracy might provide for them. But the public is starting to ask questions about the system. Citizens need help to understand how they can engage with their government between election cycles, to create demand for good governance day in and day out, and to develop the skills to effectively channel their concerns and interests. The profound gap between very high voter turnout and very low participation in CSOs points to an opportunity for USAID to activate and develop an active civil society in the country. There is also an opportunity to help strengthen local government through greater decentralization of responsibility and by ensuring that local government entities have the capacity (both technical and fiscal) to carry out those responsibilities. This report discusses these and other possible opportunities for USAID in Section 3.0.

3.0 KAP Survey Results and USAID Strategic Objective 9

This section describes how the results of the KAP survey can be used to inform and support USAID/Bangladesh's "DG Performance Monitoring Plan." The section is divided into three parts:

- **"Validation of Assumptions"** (Section 3.1) reflects on how the findings of the survey validate, and sometimes challenge, the assumptions on which SO9 and its accompanying IRs are based;
- **"Indicators"** (Section 3.2) discusses how the KAP survey can be used as baseline for measuring results; and
- **"Possible Future USAID Support"** (Section 3.3) reflects on potential new areas of study revealed by the survey.

The KAP survey provides useful insights that can assist USAID to design specific programs and interventions (i.e., "tactical" versus strategic planning)—insights into how average Bangladeshi citizens perceive the role of government and their relationship to it, insights into citizens' expectations and priorities for their government, and insights into how they define terms like "human rights" and "women's rights." Some of these insights are presented in Section 3.3. This section also shows how the KAP survey results can be used to select potential indicators and to assess their validity. The analyses presented in this section are not intended to be an exhaustive review of the KAP survey, but only to be indicative of the kinds of insights that the survey can provide as guidance for implementing SO9 and its IRs.

3.1 Validation of Assumptions

USAID/Bangladesh's SO9 (Strengthened Institutions of Democracy) has three IRs:

- IR 9.1: Active constituency for strong elected local government created;
- IR 9.2: Greater responsiveness of political parties to citizens' priorities;
- IR 9.3: Increased recognition of women's and children's rights as human rights.

The USAID/Bangladesh "DG Performance Monitoring Plan" (December 2003) recognizes that while Bangladesh has many of the formal structures of democracy, these structures often do not function in a democratic manner. The Performance Monitoring Plan recognizes that the average Bangladeshi citizen is not sufficiently knowledgeable about democracy, the role of government in a democratic society, or the need for respecting what we would consider the "basic human rights" that go along with a modern democratic society. The KAP survey findings described in previous sections of this report have clearly validated these assumptions.

The SO also recognizes that education and outreach at the most fundamental level will be needed before the situation can be improved. Thus, the underlying tactic for implementing activities under SO9 is an emphasis on the grassroots level—local government, CSOs, and NGOs—to act as champions for change while USAID takes on the role of a catalyst. The results of the KAP survey strongly support a local approach, and they offer some insights into how this approach can be implemented on the ground. For example, results of the survey indicate a degree of ambivalence on the part of the public toward NGOs. On the 0-100 favorability scale, NGOs only scored an almost neutral rating of 57. Focus group comments were both favorable and unfavorable toward NGOs, and it is likely that some NGOs are perceived more favorably than others. Donors like USAID should continue to be careful concerning the NGOs they choose to work with in order to assure that their partners are viewed favorably by the public they are supposed to serve.

The KAP survey shows, for example, that in the open-ended question, "Who are the most important leaders that solve disputes and problems and have enough influence to effectively deal with important issues in your community or neighborhood?" the most commonly stated response (45%) was "local government officials." "Leaders from important families" was a distant second (28%). These responses were consistent across all demographic lines (see Table 11). This finding provides strong support for an emphasis on local government.

Table 11: Responses to Open-ended Question, "To whom do you turn to address important issues in your community?"

Percent (%) responses	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Education		
						Illiterate	Some ed.	= SSC
Total No. Answering (weighted)	**3,140**	**1,587**	**1,553**	**713**	**2,427**	**1,039**	**962**	**1,139**
Local government officials	45	45	44	49	43	44	44	45
Leaders from important families	28	27	28	32	27	27	31	26
Wealthy individuals	26	26	26	24	27	30	25	23
Political party leaders or representatives	18	18	18	14	19	17	18	18
Elected national representatives	14	14	15	13	15	13	15	16
Business leaders and entrepreneurs	9	9	8	6	9	8	8	10
Civil servants	7	6	7	6	7	7	5	8
Religious leaders	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	4
Police officers	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	5
Tribal leaders	3	4	2	4	2	3	1	4
Trade union leaders	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
Military personnel	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	3

On the other hand, civil society participation was found to be severely lacking in Bangladesh. Only 18 percent of respondents said they participate in *any* CSO. Of those who do participate, the most commonly named type of organization was a credit or savings group. (And it could be argued that such organizations should not even be considered as CSOs.) Overall, men reported participating in civil society groups more than did women, rural residents more than urban ones, and more educated individuals more than less educated ones (see Table 12).

Table 12: Responses to the Open-ended Question, "In which civil society organization are you the most involved?"

Percent (%) responses	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Education		
						Illiterate	Some ed.	= SSC
Total No. Answering (weighted)	**572**	**406**	**166**	**123**	**449**	**100**	**174**	**299**
Credit or savings group	21	16	34	19	22	51	24	9
Sports association	18	22	6	25	16	10	19	19
Youth group	16	18	14	15	17	13	15	18
Cultural group or association	13	16	5	7	14	7	12	15
School management committee	11	11	10	10	11	4	10	14
Political group or movement	9	9	10	9	9	9	6	11
Farmer group or cooperative	8	10	4	13	7	3	10	9
Religious or spiritual group	8	10	4	10	8	3	8	10
Women's group	6	3	14	6	6	3	9	6
Trade or business association	5	6	2	4	5	2	8	5
Neighborhood committee	5	5	4	10	3	3	3	6
Hobby organization	5	6	1	4	5	5	1	6
Professional organization	4	3	5	3	4	0	4	4
Legal aid organization	2	2	1	5	1	0	1	3
Trade or labor union	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	3
Other	3	3	3	1	3	1	3	4

The most striking thing to note about Table 12 is the lack of participation in *any* type of organization. Only 572 individuals out of the total of 3,140 that were interviewed reported participating in any organization at all. And of the ones in which they did participate, political groups, farmer or trade cooperatives, and professional organizations were mentioned much less than other types of organizations.

Both the general lack of participation and the kinds of groups that are participated in will, of course, have important implications for how USAID goes about trying to reach citizens via these groups. At a minimum, it will be necessary to recognize that only a fraction of the total population is being reached at all through interventions that try to work through CSOs. Thus, other channels than these formalized organizations ought to be considered as mechanisms for intervention.

3.2 Indicators

This section reviews the results of the KAP survey vis-à-vis indicators already mentioned in USAID's Performance Monitoring Plan for SO9, and suggests additional indicators that USAID may want to consider for future monitoring.

3.2.1 Democracy and Governance

The Performance Monitoring Plan considers whether the public's appetite for democratic governance is strong, whether they see other systems of government as viable alternatives, how they view current institutions and leaders, and who they see as the leaders and problem-solvers in their communities. The KAP survey provides insights into all of these questions.

As we have seen, Bangladeshi citizens generally agree that democracy is the best form of government for their country, and voting in elections is an important part of their support for democracy. Sixty-two percent say that "a government ruled by democratically elected representatives" is the "best way to govern Bangladesh." (Of the remaining 35 percent, 21 percent say Islamic law is the best way to govern the country.)

Voter turnout is high, with 91 percent saying they are registered to vote, 85 percent saying they voted in the 2001 national elections, and 96 percent saying they will likely or certainly vote in the next election.

SO9.a of the Performance Monitoring Plan cites the KAP survey question, "Voting in elections is a powerful way to influence the direction of the state," as an important indicator for SO9.a (Change in Attitudes Over Time Toward Democracy and Democratic Practices). The results of the KAP survey show that Bangladeshi citizens overwhelmingly agree with this statement. Agreement is consistent even when the data are disaggregated by gender, urban/rural, or socioeconomic status, as Table 13 demonstrates.[30]

Table 13: Percent Responses to the Statement, "Voting in elections is a powerful way to influence the direction of the state."

	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Education Level			Income Level (thousands *taka*/month)		
					Illiterate	Some ed.	SSC or better	= 2	2-6	> 6
Agree or Strongly Agree	98	96	95	97	96	97	98	94	98	97
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1

Note: Response categories "do not know" and "refused" are omitted from this table, but included in the computation of percentages. Therefore some columns may not add up to 100%.

Caution must be taken not to use this question as an indicator in isolation. The number of people who agree with this statement is already high, so any additional increases may not be statistically significant. Furthermore, another question in the survey indicates that while citizens may agree with this statement in theory, on a day-to-day basis they are skeptical. A comment from one woman in Chittagong expressed during a focus group session sums it up: "We have the right to vote and we vote, but we don't know what this will bring for us. We just drop it in the ballot box. After that, it is up to the leaders and politicians."

Responses to other questions will provide additional insight that USAID may use to monitor change in public attitudes over time. For example, increases in the 0-100 favorability rating of the word "democracy" from its current level of 64, decreases in the number of people saying "do not know" or "refused" to questions about democracy, and increases in the number of people choosing democracy over other forms of government (now 62 percent), and increasing awareness and favorability toward the main institutions of government (such as the National Parliament and local government) will indicate changes in both attitude and knowledge over time.

[30] Responses to this question by socioeconomic status were analyzed to a greater degree than shown, but failed to bring out any additional differences. The increasing trends by education level correspond to a decrease in "do not know" responses rather than changes in opinion.

IR 9.2 seeks to improve responsiveness of political parties to citizens' priorities. IR 9.2 of the Performance Monitoring Plan mentions, "How much influence do you think you have on government actions and policy?" as an indicator. Table 14 shows citizens' responses to this question. As this table clearly shows, citizens' skepticism increases with education and income. It is also higher among urban residents compared to rural ones. With only 10 percent (overall) of citizens saying they have some or a great deal of influence, this indicator allows a great deal of room for improvement.

In addition, the difference in responses by demographic category provide a richness of information useful for "tactical" (program and project) planning. As we have already seen (Table 11), the survey showed that among the first individuals people turn to for leadership in their communities are wealthy individuals and leaders from important families. Those individuals will certainly influence the opinions of others. Common perception is that educated and urban individuals are also more influential than uneducated and rural ones. Thus, improvements in the positive response rate for this question, especially among these more influential segments of society, might be an indicator of actual improvements in government responsiveness. Still, many other questions remain unanswered: Why do educated individuals tend to be more cynical about their ability to influence government? Is it because they have a better understanding of what is possible with a well-run democracy, or is it because their expectations are greater? Why are urban residents more cynical than rural ones? Does the same cynicism apply to local government? (Our survey did not distinguish between central and local government for this particular question.) Answers to additional questions of this type can further inform USAID's program planning.

Table 14: Percent responses to the question, "How much influence do you think you have on government actions and policy?"

	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Education Level			Income Level (thousands *taka*/month)			
					Illiterate	Some ed.	SSC or better	= 2	2-6	6-12	>12
A Great Deal or Some	11	8	13	9	9	9	12	12	9	12	10
Not Much or No Influence	81	83	74	84	73	84	84	71	84	82	86

Note: Response categories "do not know" and "refused" are omitted from this table, but included in the computation of percentages. Therefore some columns may not add up to 100%.

3.2.2 Women's Rights

IR 9.3 seeks increased recognition of women's and children's rights as human rights. The area of human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, will be a tricky one to address. Violence against women, including "torture for dowry," is a deep-rooted behavior that goes back generations. Among rural, uneducated men and women both, wife beating is simply considered the way of the world and is not questioned. As an illiterate woman in Chittagong said, "Husbands can beat their wives—it is usual and natural." In an open-ended question, a veritable litany of issues of violence against women were mentioned (see Table 15).

Table 15: Responses to Open-ended Question, "What is your understanding of violence against women?

Response	Percent (%) responding
Torture for dowry	38
Physical torture	29
Rape	23
Acid throwing	19
Torture and abuse by husband	18
Robbing women	8
Harassment	5
Depriving women of property	2
Other	2

Total responding to question = 2,731

On the surface, these results seem to be in sharp contrast to the results of the question, "Women and men have/do not have equal rights and freedoms." Fully 76 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women and men have equal rights and freedoms. Nor was gender found to be a determinant in the responses—77 percent of men and 76 percent of women agreed or strongly agreed that women and men have equal rights and freedoms. Answers to the open-ended question, "What do you understand by 'basic human rights?'" provides some insight. The ARD/ARGB Team asked respondents to tell the interviewer what they had in mind when they heard the words "basic human rights." By far the largest response (27%) was meeting the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. As one young woman from Laksam said during a focus group session, "If I am starving, my husband will also starve. So we [men and women] are equal." A distant second (11%) was freedom of opinion or the right to speak, with "having the right to live as a human being" following at eight percent.

The question, "How well would you say that the basic human rights of average citizens are respected in Bangladesh?" provides additional insight. Gender is not an important determinant of the response to this question, either. The largest determinant is socioeconomic status, with more educated and wealthier respondents feeling they enjoy greater human rights than less educated, poorer ones. A comment by a young rural woman participating in one of the focus groups is enlightening. She said, "We are poor people. What rights can [we] expect to have?"

Table 16 compares the percentages with and without the "do not know" and "refused" responses included in the computation. When the "do not know" and "refused" answers are not included, the table shows the relative percentages *for those respondents who answered the question*. The differences in response by gender are insignificant in both cases. But the differences by socioeconomic status are evident even with the "do not know" and "refused" responses removed from the computation, although the trends are much less dramatic with these responses removed.

Table 16: Percent Responses to the Question, "How well would you say that the basic human rights of average citizens are respected in Bangladesh?"

	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Education Level			Income Level (thousands *taka*/month)			
					Illiterate	Some ed.	SSC or better	= 2	2-6	6-12	>12
Well or very well	22	22	25	21	23	21	22	23	24	19	20
Only a little or not at all	58	56	43	62	32	55	70	38	54	66	73
Percentages with "do not know" and "refused" included in the computation. Columns may therefore not sum to 100%. Total sample size is 3,140.											
Well or very well	27	29	37	26	39	29	24	38	31	22	21
Only a little or not at all	73	72	63	74	61	71	76	63	69	78	79

Percentages with "do not know" and "refused" removed from the computation. Columns sum to 100%. Total sample size is 2,487.

The urban/rural divide present in Table 16 is also one of socioeconomic status. A more detailed analysis (Table 17) clearly shows this. Within the categories of urban and rural residents, the important determinant is unquestionably related to education and income.

Table 17: Percent Responses to the Question, "How well would you say that the basic human rights of average citizens are respected in Bangladesh?" (Urban/Rural Detail)

		Male	Female	Education Level			Income Level (thousands *taka*/month)			
				Illiterate	Some ed.	SSC or better	= 2	2-6	6-12	>12
Urban	Well or very well	27	24	19	27	28	21	26	28	28
	Only a little or not at all	42	44	26	44	57	37	43	43	60
Rural	Well or very well	20	22	22	21	22	24	24	17	19
	Only a little or not at all	64	59	36	59	72	39	57	70	76

When asked directly whether they thought "the rights of women protected equally under the law" was an important issue, 90.5% of respondents said they thought it was very important or somewhat important. Women put slightly more importance on the issue than men did. However, it is important to put even this seemingly high response in context. Men ranked eight of the remaining 11 choices higher than they ranked equal protection for women under the law. Women ranked six of the remaining 11 higher than they rated equal protection for women. Table 18 shows the percentages of individuals that rated the issues as "very important" or "somewhat important," disaggregated by gender. The results are rank-ordered, with the issues considered the most important by the combined groups listed first.

Table 18: Percent that Responded "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" to a Series of Rights for Individuals that Should be Respected in Bangladesh

Individual Rights	Male	Female	Both
Right to education	98	98	98
Right to employment	98	98	98
Freedom of choosing between several parties and candidates when voting	98	97	98
Right to speak freely and express one's opinion	98	95	97
Right to freedom of religion	97	96	97
Right to a fair and impartial trial	94	94	94
Private property of individuals protected by law	90	93	91
Right to a safe, crime-free community	92	89	91
Rights of women protected equally under the law	88	93	90
Rights of minority groups protected equally under the law	82	80	81
Freedom of association—to form and participate in civic groups and independent organizations	81	72	77
Right of citizens to form new political parties	67	57	62

It is also important also to consider how people interpret the phrase "rights of women protected equally under the law." As one illiterate, rural man from Laksam said, "There are no laws for men, but there are several laws enacted for women. Now, women go to court with a false accusation and men are harassed."

Nor do Bangladeshi citizens think human rights are impermeable. Twenty-seven percent, over a quarter, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "There are times when it is necessary for the government to suspend the rights and freedoms of certain individuals."

Indicators developed for human rights issues should reflect these subtleties in definition, in interpretation, and in application under changing circumstances. Education will certainly help, and the fact that Bangladeshis rate the right to education as their top priority is encouraging. Only as more people are able to define human rights beyond food, shelter, and clothing can real progress be made.

3.3 Possible Future USAID Support

IR 9.1 seeks to engage CSOs as advocates for specific reforms. With the low involvement in CSOs in Bangladesh, a great deal of CSO development will be required before many citizens will be involved—although of course the effectiveness of an individual CSO in advocating for reform need not depend on high involvement from average citizens. USAID's very rigorous definition of an appropriate CSO for this IR (i.e., one advocating for specific reforms, with the terms "advocating" and "specific reforms" strictly defined) limits the numbers and kinds of organizations that could be engaged anyway, since the types of CSOs most citizens are involved in are the more "mundane" groups that influence their day-to-day lives—such as sports clubs, youth groups, and school committees.

However, if one of USAID's goals is to use CSOs as a mechanism to inform and motivate citizens, then as Table 11 shows, traditional political organizations are clearly not the right channel. USAID may want to consider information campaigns that target citizens through the CSOs they are already participating in. For example, interventions for which women are the target will have better luck working through credit or savings groups than any other group, even school management committees. This is especially true if USAID is trying to target illiterate groups—participation in credit or savings groups decreases dramatically with education. Interventions for which youths are the target will have better luck reaching both young men and young women through youth groups. Sports associations would also be a good channel for sending messages, especially in urban areas where participation in these types of

organizations is even higher than is participation in credit or savings groups. Similarly, neighborhood committees seem to be more active in urban areas than in rural ones.

USAID may want to consider direct civic education campaigns to develop a deeper understanding of democracy, the role of citizens, and the role of government. One thing that shines through in the research is the lack of understanding of the roles of institutions of government, particularly the elected ones. Citizens tend to see themselves as supplicants, rather than advocates of particular interests. They strongly support the right to vote, but they do not seem to clearly understand or appreciate their own role (and responsibility) to hold these representatives accountable for their promises. For democracy to move forward in Bangladesh, citizens need to have a clearer understanding of their own role in the system.

The survey provides some ideas about target audiences for such education and outreach. Specifically, a segment of Bangladesh's adult population—between ten to 25 percent of the adult population, or between five to 12 million adults in the country—is not familiar with democracy and is not aware of many of its key institutions. This is the 29 percent who, in the open-ended question on "democracy," did not offer a definition of democracy. The gender gap was fairly strong for this question—more than one third of women (36%) did not offer a definition of democracy compared to 22 percent of men. More older Bangladeshis answered "do not know" than did younger ones: 35 percent of those over the age of 44 compared to 25 percent of adults under the age of 29. Also, a greater proportion of poorer citizens did not offer a definition of democracy than richer ones—fully 44 percent of respondents from families with a monthly household income below 2,000 *taka* did not offer a definition of democracy. The focus groups confirmed this democracy knowledge and awareness gap, with many of the comments coming from women and those with lower educational attainment.

Focus Group Discussion on the Term "Democracy"

"I can't fully understand what democracy means." (*Urban woman, Chittagong, age 30-44, illiterate, Awami League supporter*)

"I don't understand the meaning of democracy. We are illiterate, and we don't understand." (*Rural man, Keshabpur, age 45 or above, illiterate, independent*)

"Every five years the people from the census department come and count us—I think that is what democracy is." (*Rural woman, Laksam, age 20-29, illiterate, independent*)

"I do not hear about democracy. I just ride a rickshaw and eat rice." (*Rural man, Laksam, age 30-44, illiterate, Jatiya Ershad supporter*)

These results point to a possible development opportunity in targeting an information and awareness campaign to older, poorer individuals, and to poor women, is likely to have a bigger impact than would targeting similar campaigns to groups who are already familiar with and knowledgeable about this topic. Such a campaign might help to address the "demand" side of the equation.

On the "supply side," USAID may want to consider supporting efforts by the elected National Parliament and local government to make decisions only after consultations with their constituents. One way to do this might be to develop the capacity of political parties to serve as effective channels for organizing public interests. The survey research shows that the image of political parties is not all bad, and even those who say they are members of a particular party also say that the other parties "offer good ideas for addressing the country's problems" (Table 9). Political parties are a key institution in Bangaldesh, but they currently rely on unpopular means such as *hartals* to forward their agendas. As with the elected Members of Parliament and local government, USAID may want to consider efforts to support broader

consultations by political parties with their constituents in party decision-making and efforts to develop the party's platform.

3.4 Possible Future Survey Research

While the KAP survey more than satisfied the purposes for which it was designed, it also revealed some interesting aspects of public knowledge, attitudes, and practices in Bangladesh that USAID may want to explore further in future survey research. Four areas in particular may be of interest to USAID:

1. **Corruption**. The KAP survey only scratched the surface in what is very fertile territory for future opinion research on how the average citizen defines and understands corruption, and what coping mechanisms they develop to pursue their interests in what appears to be such a stifling environment caused by corruption.

2. **Views on political affiliation and views about specific political parties**. The KAP survey made no attempt to develop a map of public support for political parties; the ARD/SRGB Team did not ask the types of questions that would be needed to do so. USAID might be interested in understanding why people affiliate with certain parties versus others, and how stable that affiliation and support is. Are political parties currently a force for positive political change or for stasis in Bangladesh, in the view of ordinary people? The jury is still out on this important question, and the Team's research indicates that the trend could be in either direction.

3. **Views on women's rights**, particularly the issue of violence against women. The KAP survey only scratched the surface in terms of figuring out what people understand to be women's rights—or for that matter human rights—and whether they think men and women have equal social, economic, legal, and political rights and freedoms.

4. **Views on economic reform and the market**. The KAP survey did not even touch on economic or market issues, as these issues were outside the realm of the scope of work. However, these issues came up again and again in the focus groups, often very early in the sessions. As far as DG issues are related to economic and market issues, USAID may be interested in further research about how people feel about the issue of free market economics, the role of government in regulating the economy, and how much of the economy should be controlled by the government. The KAP survey includes a few incidental questions and findings that point in certain directions—that government regulation is a good thing, and that fairly significant government involvement in providing support to population is perceived positively—but still there is openness to the idea of a market economy. This also promises to be an interesting and important topic for development.

Annexes

Annex A: English Survey Questionnaire

Annex B: Bangla Survey Questionnaire

Annex A: English Survey Questionnaire

Annex B: Bangla Survey Questionnaire